



던전 디펜스

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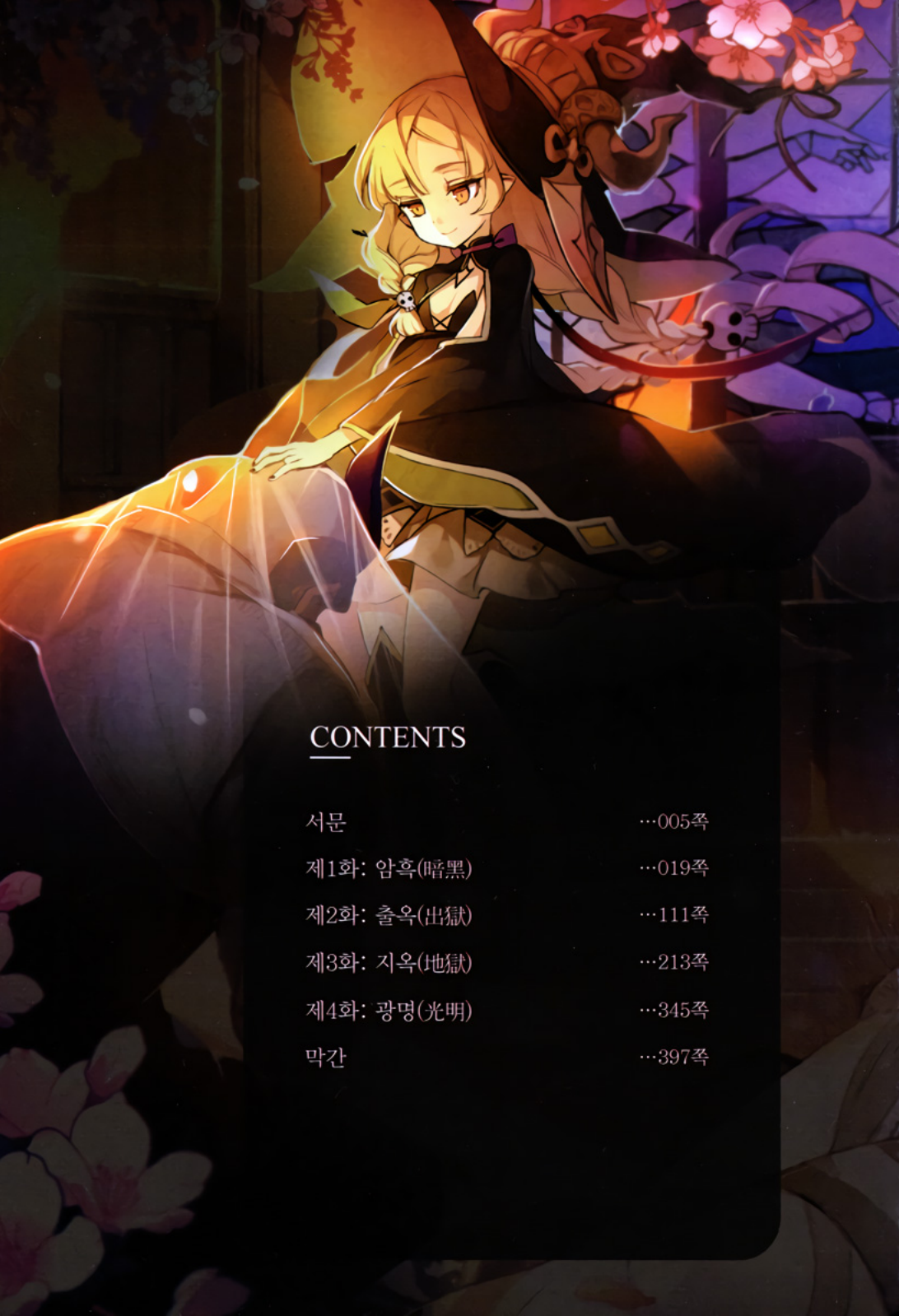
DUNGEON DEFENSE

이현하 지음 · cocorio 일러스트



영상출판
미디어(주)





CONTENTS

서문	...005쪽
제1화: 암흑(暗黒)	...019쪽
제2화: 출옥(出獄)	...111쪽
제3화: 지옥(地獄)	...213쪽
제4화: 광명(光明)	...345쪽
막간	...397쪽

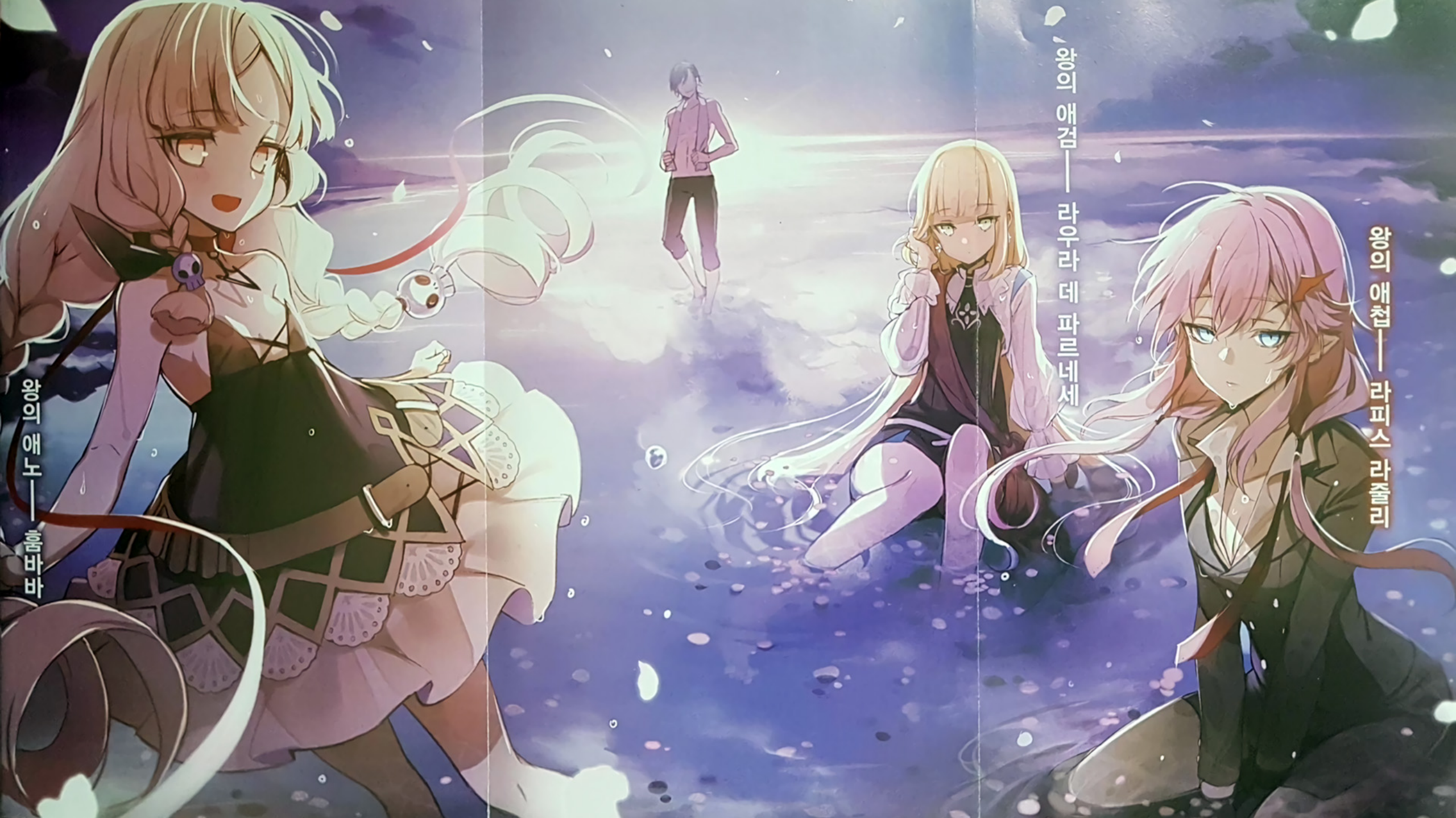
DANTALIAN FAMILIA



왕의 애첩 — 라피스 라줄리

왕의 애검 — 라우라 데 파르네세

왕의 등거 — 에피코카



Dungeon Defense (던전 디펜스) - Volume 05 by Yoo Heonhwa (유현화).

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Peasants, drug addicts, and slaughterers.

The world has ruined you all.

It is now your turn to ruin the world.

「I shall build a kingdom for you all.」

No army is forever an enemy.

No army is forever an ally.

Survive against the humans and slaughter the demons.

Survive against the demons and use the humans.

———An anarchy where purges, betrayals, conspiracies, and lies are rampant.

Before long, a Demon Lord establishes a crown land.

Not for the humans or the demons, but for the peasants.

Be driven by avarice.
Live solely through avarice.

□ Kinslayer, Imperial Princess of the Empire, Elizabeth von Habsburg

Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 10

Polles, Bruno Plains, Army of the Crusaders

The night became cold once the spring rain had abated. Puddles of water that were left behind by the rain were scattered here and there throughout the camp and were slowly drying. I see that water dries well even during the night.

Ever since that day I played Black and White Flags against Demon Lord Dantalian, I have picked up the habit of carefully listening to the sound of nothing. If you inadvertently listen to these nothings, then you will come to realize that those nothings are actually beating as something. It was night. The candlelight wavered firmly as it burned my body, and while it wavered, it also shed light on the words that I had held in my hand.

— Month 4, Day 10. Late evening. Enemy camp, in the middle of holding an ancestral rite, a purge was carried out. Although it felt as if an internal strife was about to occur, it was quickly quelled. It can be assumed that Demon Lord Barbatos and Demon Lord Paimon are behind this. The surveillance is strict.

It was a note that was torn into a smaller piece of paper because the writer could only write a few lines. This spy had pressed down on a shard of graphite in order to write this, but considering how the letters were jagged, it is clear that this was not written on top of a flat surface. I could feel this spy's desperate loyalty from these ruggedly written words.

.....I see that this is a secret message that was sent after being hastily written. Beautiful.

Several crows were obediently lowering their bodies on top of my desk. Demonkind treated crows auspiciously, so they did not hunt them down carelessly. I had planted spies deeply into the shadows of the things that the enemy treated with caution. I removed another note from the ankle of a different crow and spread it out before me.

— Month 4, Day 10. Evening. A disturbance occurred amidst the enemy forces. As Demon Lords took the lives of other Demon Lords, the enemy forces were split into several parts. While they split apart, mixed together, and struck back, the enemy general, Laura De Farnese, performed. It is chaotic. It is difficult to conjecture more from what can be seen.

“.....”

The words were neat and straight. It was a report that was written leisurely. I carefully peered at the sight of the note being dyed yellow as the candlelight continued to burn.

I opened my mouth and spoke to my head maid.

“Julia.”

“Yes, Your Highness.”

“Do you know when I became aware of the destiny of an emperor?”

“How could this one dare speak about the duty of an emperor?”

“It was when I was little.”

The head maid bowed deeply. The head maid was a girl who would

quietly keep me company even when I would pass the time talking to myself. To this child, that was her duty as my loyal subject.

“Evening after evening, every corner of the imperial palace would be radiant due to the abundant number of candlelights. As I thawed my body, I would become curious about something as I stared at a candle that was lighting up a corner. Why, if you go to look at the candles that should have melted the day before, you will see that, on the day after, all of the candles would have recovered completely and be burning once more. My young self was in awe. ……So they resurrect. Ah, every night, the candles resurrect in order to brighten the next approaching night.”

As I unfolded the news that the crows had brought from several distances away one note at a time, I continued my story.

“That was what I had regarded as evidence of God’s descent. Because I was in both awe and astonishment, be it my tutor or my elder brother, I had told everyone about it. Impious fellows would go around clamoring that God did not exist, but that was merely the foolish mumblings of the people who have only lived during the day. God is a very shy individual, so he only wanders around the palace at night.”

“…….”

“No one believed me. If anything, they jeered at me.”

Thus I decided to confirm it.

“It was night.”

I snuck out of my bedroom and hid in a hallway where many candles had melted. My heart was pounding because of the thought that I was about to bear witness to the sight of God roaming around at night.

“Even the attendants had gone to sleep, so while the palace was silent, the sounds of the guards’ footsteps, the sound of an old soldier

coughing up phlegm, and the whirl of the wind, these nothings remained quiet as they continued to be nothing…….”

It was when I was little.

The sounds of the guards' footsteps were simply a clamor of steps within the halls, and as the sound of coughing up phlegm was a noise that ominously shook the air, the whirl of the wind was the sound of time being wasted tediously. I had yet to learn how to carefully listen to these nothings. During that season where nearly everything was nothing, my heart pounded furiously at the thought of seeing God, and at that time, the entire world was playing a variation of the tune which came from my beating heart.

How long did I have to wait?

“Someone approached the candlelit hall. The footsteps were much too normal for them to be called the footsteps of God. The person's form was also much too pitiable for it to be called the appearance of God. Regardless, before the man had drawn closer to the candles, I still believed that he was God. I simply thought that God was magnanimous enough to be comfortable with even normal and pitiable things. Soon after, once I witnessed God extinguish the dying ember of a candle, replace the melted candle with a new one, and set the new candle ablaze, I came to a realization——that that wasn't God.”

He was just a normal attendant.

He was simply a pitiable human.

Before I knew it, I was ruminating over the past with my eyes closed.

“Julia. That night was quite dreary. What I had seen was a normal and pitiable attendant on night duty, but what I had done was conjecture something more than what could be seen. The candles did not resurrect. They were merely replaced.”

“.....”

“Since the candles were replaced every day, it is clear that there was someone who made those candles every day. Since there was a person who made a living by solely making candles every day, it is also indisputable that there was another person who cultivated, harvested, and handed that candlemaker their food.”

I was not aware that those subjects, those jobs were a major part of the crown land. I have never seen the artisan who made a living by making candles. I have never seen the farmers and I have never seen the blacksmiths who made those farmers their farming equipment. However, as the candle was replaced right before my eyes and shining brightly——similar to how the burning candlelight was clear and certain, the subjects that I couldn't see with my eyes were also clear and certain.

The people existed.

From that point forth, every world shone as lights in my eyes.

People and people were just connected over flames and flames.

I only learned what that clear and evidently burning candlelight was called later on.

“Do you understand, Julia?”

“.....”

“On that day, I lost God and gained a nation.”

I opened my eyes.

Once my eyes were open, I turned to look at the maids.

“The monarch which you all serve does not believe in the resurrection of God. I am not religious. If I were to have a doctrine, then it would simply be the doctrine of a candlelight. My creed would

be for the candlelight to protect the night perennially, without end. As I look into my candlelight, I unravel and fathom the people from a distance. Do you all consider me to be blasphemous?"

Julia knelt down and the other maids followed suit by lowering themselves.

"We humble servants have always been in awe of Your Highness."

"Although I may have many duties as an emperor, once you have conjectured more from what can be seen, that is when it can be finally established. I shall ask you this. Do you all believe in my perception?"

"Please command us. We shall obey."

I nodded.

"Summon the commanders. Since it is the middle of the night, you will have to wake them up with caution. If they ask why they are being called, then tell them to bring their weapons. If they ask for a deeper cause, then inform them that the Imperial Princess has forbidden you from answering any more questions."

"Should we summon all of them?"

"Yes."

The commanders had all gathered by the time it took for a candle to melt by half of a handbreadth. The night was chilly because the spring rain had receded. Because they did not know the reason why they were gathered during the night, the lips of the commanders were dry. I gave a command.

"I heard that a wicked booklet has been circulating within our forces. They say that the speech of the enemy general was copied down and is being passed around among the common soldiers, nurturing traitorous thoughts within their minds. If these traitorous thoughts grow, then will they not eventually become a rebellion? It is

said that a nation is a giant tree where the roots are placed within the hearts of the people. Do you all not think that the roots would become firm if you remove the weed before they can cause corrosion? Commanders, heed my words.”

“Yes, Your Highness.”

“With my concern for those roots as the cause, I command you. I shall allow you all to take a leave of absence tonight. Utilize the subordinates who you believe are trustworthy and raid every single tent. Turn them inside out. If you find one of these booklets within a tent, then execute every single soldier that was assigned to that tent. Do not take their lives while causing an uproar. You must not allow the farmers to needlessly sing as you pull out the weed. Behead them.”

The commanders lowered their bodies to the ground.

“All of them?”

“All of them.”

It was night.

There were flames billowing here and there throughout the military encampment, brightening the dark night. There was a decapitated corpse submerged within each puddle of water which the moisture of the spring rain had left behind.

The soldier who was raising his voice in order to claim that he was innocent was beheaded in the middle of his assertion. His head fell into a mire and muddy water flowed into his gaping maw. The surface level of the puddle shrank accordingly to the amount of muddy water the mouth of the corpse had swallowed. Like so, the puddles all around dried up completely.

I see that water dries well even during the night.

—O Goddess of All who resides in the clearest of skies, please do not toss away these deeply sinful children even if they arrive at your doorsteps, and simply look after them with mercy and tolerance. We shall bury their earthly corpses, so, O Goddess of All, please reap their heavenly spirits. Although we know how to bury the dead, we do not know how to bury their souls, so we can only look up at you, O Goddess of All, for your wisdom…….

Priests chanted reclusively as they roamed around the camp. Because a saintess who claimed to be from the Temple of Artemis was leading the Hymn of the Faithfully Departed, the commanders apathetically left the group of apostles alone. As expected, I had no reason to obstruct the hearts of the priests who wished to soothe the spirits with their hymn.

I passed the note that was written by the second spy to my head maid.

“Julia. The person who had written this is a traitor who has submitted to the side of demonkind.”

“Pardon?”

“As the day was chaotic, how was this individual able to find the time to write down their words so neat and properly? A disturbance had occurred and this person should have also been caught up in that disturbance, but as you can see, they had tipped off the people above them and obtained the time to leisurely write their report. Attach a separate spy on this person. Kill them before half a month can pass.”

“…….”

The head maid bowed.

“As you command.”

I turned my head and gazed out towards the other side of the

Bruno Plains. It was deep into the night so the enemy encampment could not be seen. Although the enemy encampment was not visible, solely the outline of the tower of human skulls which the demons had piled up towards the sky could be vaguely seen under the moonlight.

Laura Farnese must be performing there. I see that the child who was nothing had barely become something after being taken in by Dantalian. Therefore, the child was performing for Dantalian who had molded her into something.

In the end, can that be beautiful?

Even a life that is completely dependent on someone else.

.....

Even that.

As I listened to the sound of flames flowing through the night, I pondered that thought.

Chapter One

Darkness

I do not have a religion.

My father scoffed at religion. He has always been a man who would scoff at things frequently.

To my father, religion was opium for the weak and, by extension, a factory that created weak people. My father wanted his household to be a hunting ground that raised the strong. Even a gap where opium could be planted was not allowed in his household.

My father had once sat at the dining table and said this:

“The trend of religion has passed. To be a little more exact, even now, the trend is in the middle of withering away.”

It was obvious what my father wanted from his children. He wanted us to grow up into beasts that could rip through anything. Religion was the easiest livestock to rip the flesh off of. My father’s scoffing was easily passed down onto us.

At that time, besides us, our mothers were also seated at the dining room table, but there was one among them who was religious. From what I can remember, she was from a family that had very strict religious traditions. Nevertheless, I have never seen her give a retort to my father’s jeers.

She would simply pray by herself for 5 seconds before every meal. By doing so, she would narrowly overlook the various responses. My father would end up smiling bitterly before saying,

‘Well. It can’t be helped.’

At those times, his tone would nearly sound as if he were simply allowing his silly lover to have her few seconds of freedom.

She behaved like a heretic with deep sins. She didn't raise her voice when memorizing scriptures, nor did she meet up with other believers in private. No, she didn't even preach to her own child about religious doctrines. A silent tribute before a meal. 5 seconds. It felt as if that was all there was to her faith.

The time I witnessed the sight of her praying was almost close to a coincidence. Looking back at it now, I'm uncertain whether that was actually a prayer or not. Every once in a while, trivially peculiar things happen to me. During those times, I have trivially peculiar thoughts. This story is like that as well.

I had shut myself in the study on that day. I had done so because the mothers were occupying the living room and having a large quarrel. They were so loud that the sound of the argument between mothers had even seeped through the door crevice of the study.

— This is my home. My and that person's home. How dare you uneducated people thoughtlessly set foot…….

— If someone here is going to leave, then it should be you! It's all your fault after all. Last time and this time as well, all of it…….

— Please, if we think before we speak, then…….

Arguments like this occurred at the drop of a hat.

There was nothing significant about it. No matter how loud their dispute on whether I'm the whore or she's the whore got, the mothers were consistent when it came to turning a blind eye to what was actually the most important conclusion, in other words, the fact that it was my father who was the worst motherfucker in the universe. At the very least, it was like that when they fought among themselves. In this house, as my father was like an inviolable existence, to them, everyone excluding themselves was a whore.

In that moment, someone had run into the study. It was her. She must have been struck by someone as her lips were bleeding. Soon after, something bewildering occurred. The moment she and I made eye contact, she burst into tears.

I calmly comforted her and stroked her shoulder. I wonder how much time passed. She grasped my hand and wept.

“Forgive your mothers. Forgive your father. Forgive us. Every day, aah. Truly, I repent my sins every day…… Truly…….”

It felt as if I had been slapped since my head went blank.

She continued to mutter while keeping her head lowered.

“Please forgive us. As I shall repent my sins, please take pity on the sins which I could not repent. Please forgive us…….”

The person who she was pleading for forgiveness from was most likely not me. She wasn’t crying to me, but to her God after all.

At a glance, it felt as if she had succeeded. As her cries traveled an incredible distance when she wept, it almost sounded as if it were not here.

How desperate her voice was. It was to an extent that it nearly fooled even me. If she had not shed her tears on me, if her tears had not stained my clothes, then there was a chance that I might have actually believed that God had heard her cries.

At the very most, the only place where her tears could drench was my clothes. The only place that would willingly be drenched by her tears was also my clothes. I then understood that this was the problem of everything.

I comforted her for a long time before sending her back out of the study. I sat down on a chair and fell into deep thought. Who could forgive that person’s sins?

She had cried to God. Or maybe she had cried towards her entire life. However, as I am not a God, it was not her entire life even more. No matter who it was. What can anyone do for her? Who can declare the innocence of a human?

The place outside of the door was still dreary with the sound of fighting.

— Last time as well, because we had done everything the way you wanted…….

— No, it's because you were so needlessly persistent…….

— Please, if you're going to fight, then do it outside…….

I picked up the book that I was reading earlier.

The words were not registering in my eyes. Only sound. As it was the sound of fighting that had started before I was born and will be the sound of fighting that will continue even after my father's death, this continued to echo in my head.

Even the cry that had been burying itself into my clothes a second ago was mixed in over there. The sound of crying and the sound of voices feasted upon each other and disgorged one another. I felt dizzy. There were only a few words that reached my ear and could be heard distinctly.

All your.

No, you.

Please.

That was it.

The musical melody of Beethoven, which I had turned on, was flowing through the study. 'From darkness to light', this was supposedly a quote from Beethoven. I did not know how many gaps I had to cross, nor did I know how many the gaps had to be in order for my life to become a single melody.

This was what I was simply unaware of.

▯ **The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian**
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 10
Polles, Bruno Plains, Army of the Crescent Alliance

“Sinner Dantalian, listen.”

My trial was carried out in a simple fashion. It happened late in the night.

Once the afternoon sun shone down on the season where the spring rain had just ended, the world became humid. That humidity continued on even into the evening. As I was still seated inside of the prison, I received the steam that was wandering somewhere between the late spring and early summer with my bare skin.

According to the judge,

“A few days ago, you had basked in the glory of being selected as the representative to give the speech of the Crescent Alliance to announce the start of war. You, however, had dared to nominate the lowly blood of a human and, as a result, you had disgraced your blood allies. Although you are the representative of all of demonkind, since the one you had chosen to act in your place was a human, at the very least, you have thrown away your obligations, and at most, you have sullied the customs of demonkind. Your sin is tremendous.”

is what I had done.

I don't know if my sin is tremendous or not, but the only thought that was going through my head was that the camp was tremendously noisy even during the night. The purge was currently in a present progressive form. Although the Demon Lords who were revealed as traitors were all beheaded, there were still soldiers who were loyal to those decapitated heads, so a slaughter of the highest acclaim was occurring at the bottom of the hill.

—

Farnese was still performing there. The performance that had started late in the evening did not stop even when a quarter of a day had passed. It happened late in the night. In the center of where soldiers were killing soldiers and soldiers were being killed by soldiers, Farnese's fingers flew across the piano keys as she relied on the torches that were lighting various areas of the camp.

The witches were convoying my trial from a distance and muttering to each other.

“Seriously, if she's going to keep that up, then how long does Miss General intend to perform—?”

“I don't know. A lot of stuff must have piled up in her mind as she lived her life. If she can release her large amount of stress by doing that, then it'd be a relief.”

“Do you think I asked that question because I didn't knooow that? I asked that because her song is shady. From a good perspective, it's a song overflowing with madness, and from a bad perspective, it's just a crazy song. Either way, it doesn't change the fact that our general is a slightly crazy bitch.”

“You're hearing it like that because your knowledge of art is exceedingly lacking. Even if the things you're lacking in isn't just one or two things, among those things, you're overwhelmingly lacking in your knowledge of art. Similar to how only humans appear in the eyes of humans, only crazy bitches appear in the eyes of crazy bitches, so the phenomenon where General Farnese appears like a crazy bitch to you just proves the fact that you're a crazy bitch. Wow. I was really fucking logical just now.”

“Aha. Do you want to be fucking logically beat up?”

“If you want to prove me wrong, then try composing a decent song yourself.”

“Aaall right. I’ll start composing right away. You provoked me. For starters, once you play my song, then thooose corpses that died over there will spring up and start dancing, and even Master Dantalian’s penis will stand up and dance fancifully. Just you wait…….”

“…….”

I wonder if it’s because the witches were rattling on endlessly. The judge’s expression changed into a frown. Similarly, the demon soldiers the judge had brought also had quite the bad complexion. The witches were no different to outcasts. It must be unpleasant. Although it should be my role as their master to stop them, who cares? I left them alone.

Because the girl who came here as the judge was a bit annoying.

“Haa.”

In the end, the judge stopped reading out my sentencing and let out a sigh.

“……Heey. It’d be nice if you listened to me a bit seriously. This isn’t someone else’s sentencing but yours, Skinnybones. No matter how much this may be just for the sake of formality, goofing off so blatantly like that is going too far, isn’t it?”

The judge was none other than Demon Lord Sitri.

Paimon’s close aide, the girl who had at one point tried to poison me to death was reading my crime to me. Sitri’s expression would become vague when she rebuked me for my wrongdoing, but it felt like that was because she herself knew that she had nothing to be ashamed about. If that weren’t the case? Then she’s a fucking bastard.

The problem was the issue regarding whether Sitri was a fucking

bastard or a fucking bitch.

“I have no idea what you may be talking about, Your Honor. I am already focused. In truth, I am so focused that it almost feels as if I cannot be any more focused than this. I am so concentrated that if I were to be any more concentrated than this, then, on the contrary, I would no longer be able to concentrate.”

“Yeah, so that’s why you’re fervently staring at my crotch even now?”

“It is a territory that deserves to be academically researched.”

“You mean a territory that deserves to be pervertedly indulged in, you pervert.”

Rank 12th, Demon Lord Sitri was a hermaphrodite. This meant that she possessed both a pOnis and vOgina at the same time, but a king can’t possibly utter such vulgar words like simultaneous possessor of a pOnis and a vOgina, so I am making do by elegantly referring to her as a hermaphrodite. I am a gentleman who knows courtesy after all.

“How is it like, Your Highness Sitri? Is there a difference between the pleasure you bask in when using your male genitalia and the bliss you experience when using your female genitalia? Although I have heard many times before that the pleasure which the female genitalia experience is much greater than its male counterpart, there is not much to that statement if I am not provided proof. There is a possibility that the type of sexual pleasure itself is different. Since the sensation of being rammed and doing the ramming are completely different, the very act of ruthlessly lumping those two together and calling it sexual pleasure may possibly be mistaken. If that is the case, then it would be an issue of preference. Your Highness Sitri. Your Respectable Honor. It may be presumptuous of me to ask, but between being rammed and doing the ramming, which act is more to your taste, Your Honor?”

“Yup, you pervert. You’re already perverted and not only are you

perverted to the point that it feels as if you cannot be any more perverted than this, you're so perverted that if you somehow do become more perverted than this, then at that point, you'd have already stopped being a pervert and have become something else."

This was a ridiculous slander. Honestly speaking, I was slightly shocked. Even if this woman———this man———no, this woman, no this man, in short, this person who could either be a fucking bitch or a fucking bastard, this Demon Lord who I have yet to determine if they're a fucking bastard or a fucking bitch so, in short, I'll refer to them as Schrodinger's fuck———even if she was simply reading straight from the untampered manuscript which was written by both Barbatos and Paimon, if you consider her statement just now, it was dubious as to whether she was actually maintaining neutrality as the judge or not. To be honest, it was also doubtful as to whether there were enough brain cells stored inside that skull or not. However, this might be a bit of a rude suspicion to have. Whenever I find myself in a situation where it is difficult to tell whether the opposition in front of me has brain cells or not, I was on the side of believing that they did. I am still a gentleman who knows courtesy after all…….

"That is certainly true. Our Master Dantalian is indeed a perverted pervert."

"Yup. Our master and the word pervert are so closely connected to one another, that it's quite difficult to claim that he isn't a pervert. Not only is it incredibly difficult to do, but if you deny the fact that our master is a pervert, then it'd feel like you're denying our master's very being. In other words, this means that Master Dantalian's very essence is perverted. Ah. I was really fucking logical just now."

"How strange. It seems logic has changed without my knowledge."

"By the way, what are you scribbling on that parchment? How dare you do something else even though we're discussing the fact that our master is a pervert."

"I'm writing a song. What's so new about the fact that Master

Dantalian is a pervert that you girls need to babble about it? If anything, you all might as well babble about the fact that the sun will also rise in the morning tomorrow and also set at night tomorrow since that will at least bestow upon all of your lacking sense of culture a smidgeon of new knowledge. More importantly, in order to prove my knowledge of art, I'm in the middle of composing an amazing song, a song that humanity has never heard of thus far and never will in the future."

"I wonder about that. From what I can tell, I feel like your statement just now is actually the bullshit that humanity has never heard of thus far and never will in the future....."

"Now that I think about it, I heard a rumor that Master Dantalian slept with General Farnese."

"What?"

"What was that?"

"What did you say?"

"What do re mi did you say?"

"Beautiful. A magnificent chorus. Good. If we add our ensemble to the general's performance, then it'll make it even better. It's only right for crazy bitches to sing for a song played by a crazy bitch. Sing, you bitches. Dance, you bitches. Let us hold our own Walpurgis Night by ourselves."

"What did you say la ti fa mi re dooo—?"

"Damn it, that's a bit too much. You went too far. The chorus ended up coming to a halt as soon as it had begun because of some psychotic bitch. This is why singing with crazy bitches is quite the difficult task. They're quite the crazy bitches after all."

"Wait a second. If that rumor is true, then why doesn't Master even look our way even though he's slept with the general? Though I

shouldn't be the one to talk, from our and the general's appearances, our ages don't look that far apart, right? To be honest, we're pretty much the same. We're similarly young. Why am I hearing this rumor about our master sleeping with General Farnese for the first time?"

"That can be answered with a very simple response. Because it's a rumor that I made up just now."

"This fucking bitch?"

"So what were we talking about?"

"We were talking about Master Dantalian being a pervert."

"We were talking about how Master Dantalian slept with the general just now."

"Dear Lord. Is that true? Really, Master. You can't live like such a pervert. A person should live with some courtesy."

"....."

And my witches were fellows who had shoved something like courtesy into a food waste disposal bin. These damned girls.

"These sluts who wouldn't even be satisfying to chew to death ———."

Rustle.

It was at the instant that the commander whom Sitri had brought pulled out his sword.

The witches who were chatting and cackling among themselves raised their staffs and aimed them at the throats of the soldiers. It was night. Shadows that were clearly not cast by the night wrapped around the necks of the soldiers like octopus tentacles. They wickedly flicked around as if they could lick the necks of the soldiers and deprive them of their lives at any moment.

“.....”

The commander gulped. In the distance, although the slaughter under the pretext of purging was still noisy and the song that Farnese was performing was also prominent, this place, because this hill where my prison cell was located was like the eye of the storm placed at the very center of all the clamor, the sound of someone gulping was bleak.

“Yeah?”

“Well?”

“What?”

The witches tilted their heads. The angle and speed with which the witches had tilted their heads were identical. While obliquely tilting their heads at the same speed and angle, the witches smiled gaily.

“Is it your first time seeing crazy bitches?”

“.....,”

“Mm. Sir. You. Mister. I don’t think this is our first meeting. I remember seeing your face somewhere. Where was it? Ahahah. Where did I witness this punk’s faaace?”

Aha, the witch then uttered.

“Yotvingian Plains. The assembly area of the Crescent Alliaaance.”

“.....”

“That’s right. That’s when I saw you. That’s when you showed your face, while moving those trivial eyes. While wagging that dirty mouth. Yup. I saw you then. What did you prattle on about at that tiiime? My dear comrades, my beloved ladies. Do you remember—?”

“I remember.”

“I remember.”

“I remember well.”

“His Highness Dantalian was leading the troops and passing through the humble encampment, but they obstructed our path. They threw snowballs at us. It was piles of snow that were smeared in mud. We had no other choice but to protect His Highness with our lowly bodies. We didn’t even hope that someone would wipe our bodies, but His Highness personally wiped our clothes clean.”

The witches giggled in a low tone. Their laughter easily seeped into the low air of the night sky. The laughter flowing from the witches was uniquely light. I believed that that was the case because they had thrown away their lives somewhere. As their proof for having thrown it away somewhere, the witches cackled as they pulled up something that had happened a fair while ago.

— For Your Honor’s mistress to be an outcast, general to be a human, and royal bodyguards to be witches, Your Honor’s good faith impales the sky. Indeed, it’s befitting of the King of Peasants.

— You must be very fortunate to be so popular with women, Your Honor! Please teach the people how to bed lowly harlots and spread the information throughout the world.

— Does Your Honor plan to cut us lowly subjects down? That’s fine. Since Your Honor had stabbed the throat of His Highness Andromalius in order to save the life of a succubus whore, then killing dozens or hundreds of us lowly subjects for the sake of those witches should also be possible, right?

— Please step over our corpses with Your Honor’s grace.

Although it was something that had happened a fairly long time

ago, the witches remembered it well as it was not something that had occurred quite a long time ago.

Each witch took a role and they recited to each other the lines which the soldiers had uttered on that day. As they continued to recite the lines, the shadows that were digging into the necks of the soldiers dug in further. The sound of gulping resonated here and there.

“Master?”

“Our master.”

“These fellows took out their swords first so how should they be tortured?”

I nodded.

“How unsightly. But how can they be used if they are killed just because they are unsightly?”

“Then what should be done?”

“Kill only one.”

Blood scattered.

“.....”

“.....”

It happened late in the night.

The front of the spring rain had battered the Habsburg Empire and it wasn't until three or four days ago that the rain had departed a bit towards the south. The rain clouds had sprayed an abundant supply of water on the ground, allusively proving its legacy. On the horizon of the Bruno Plains, only the puddles of water heading south were infinite. When the numerous torches spread throughout the encampment shines on those surfaces of water, it becomes beautiful as the puddles become radiant.

At the bottom of the hill, in that nirvana that was half-water and half-dirt, unknown soldiers were shouting fiercely. Although I could not see the soldiers, the torches displayed their shadows and those shadows shouted with their black maws.

— Kill the traitors!

The legs of the shadows were buried up to their calves in each pool of muddy water. Within the vicinity of their buried calves, as one might suspect, the mouth of some unknown corpse was submerged. The mouths could not possibly drink all of the muddy water. Be that as it may, they could not disgorge the water either.

They were merely submerged underneath the surface of the water.

They merely sank as if they were in a swamp.

Muddy water entered the opened mouths of the corpses and the surface levels of the pools shrunk according to the extent of those mouths. It felt as if that was the corpses' way of digging their own graves. It was a gravesite all around.

—

In the center of the land that was filled with graves in every direction, Farnese continued to perform her song. The night sky overshadowed the world, making it seem as if everything was wrapped in black vinyl. On that surface, Farnese's performance became gloss and simmered. In each spot that the starlight shone down upon, the girl's performance crawled up like a snake's tongue and licked the lower parts of the starlight.

Thus, as the spewed up clamorous cries from the shadows formed a low key and Farnese's escalating sound formed a major key, the already dead corpses occasionally sunk down to the bottom as silence, resulting in music resonating throughout the land that was filled with graves.

— Kill them!

The shadows shouted. Or perhaps, their mouths did.

—

Farnese performed. Or perhaps, her fingers did.

— Slaughter them.....



Perhaps the eyes being black with rage would be preferable. While the corpses were stepped on along with the mud and the mud rotted away along with the corpses, eyes that were useless no matter what they looked at, maws that could not be quenched no matter what they drank, and fingers that did not particularly matter regardless of what they pointed at. As they pointed at those unpardonable traitors.

The sound itself was shouting.

As a result of using Farnese as my proxy to spread poison throughout the world, they were shouting while gaping their mouths wide open and the corpses passed away with their maws stuck in the ground. As the torches illuminated brightly due to that sound, clamor, and silence——when they become a single shadow and swell——ah, at that time, my life knew nearly no bounds.

All of that was the state of enlightenment which I had brought about during the single week I was in prison.

Victory was nice.

Furthermore, it was occasionally beautiful.

“That,”

After breaking the long silence, Sitri spoke.

“was a subordinate I cherished quite a bit.”

“Is that so? This is unfortunate.”

I turned my head with difficulty after staring at that nirvana for a while. Turning my head was quite the strenuous task. If I had gazed at it any longer, then I might have completely forgotten the fact that I was still imprisoned.

“They had died because they ended up serving a bad lord after all.”

“.....”

The thing which I gazed at instead of the nirvana was a Demon Lord's feverless face.

Sitri, the Demon Lord of the Mountain Faction who was much superior to me in terms of position as she was ranked 12th, was staring blankly at me. Her eyes were telling me that she wished for nothing more than to be able to twist the neck of the cocky male who was sitting before her. She was so fearsome that I almost involuntarily apologized to her. I am serious. If she had glared at me a bit more seriously, then I might have even forgotten the fact that she had once tried to poison me to death.

.....It is always another person's rage that drags someone who is trying to slightly prolong their stay in nirvana back to reality.

I slowly opened my mouth.

"I am aware as to why Your Honor of all people has come here after having been assigned the duty as a judge. Yes, I know. Her Excellency Barbatos and Her Highness Paimon are most likely currently at their busiest. The two of them most likely wish for me to be trialed in a way where I had not been confined for even a single day."

"....."

"My imprisonment is evidence of their dispute. As long as the Plains Faction and the Mountain Faction are now allied, there is a need for the vestiges of my imprisonment to quickly be erased. The current Crescent Alliance is in quite the precarious situation after all..... No, shall I be a bit more honest?"

I chuckled slightly.

"This is not the only time it has been like this, the Crescent Alliance has always been in the state of being on the edge. Instead of being sacred, the Crescent Alliance has been barbaric, and instead of being blood allies through the meaning of shedding blood and tears while fighting together in order to face a common enemy, it is blood allies

through the meaning of making your own allies shed some blood.”

“You.”

“Am I being too crude? Have I gone too far? I apologize. Nevertheless, Your Excellency Sitri, it is already a Crescent Alliance where 7 traitors were brought to light. From the start, half of the Demon Lords did not even participate in the Crescent Alliance. They have positioned themselves way back in the rear and the sole thing they are praying for is our failure. This one is asking this out of pure curiosity, but is now the right time to be heavily discussing sanctity and celestialness?”

The Demon Lord Allied Forces as of late have become weaker than ever. Demon Lord Belial died after having his face peeled off by Elizabeth, the Imperial Princess. Several Demon Lords whom I have never met before have either died in battle or were chased out of their castles. Adding to that, although there being traitors was a given, it turned out to be 7 Demon Lords.

The sacrifice was immense. The human alliance before us was in good condition. The area behind our backs was swarming with traitors, no, traitors to our kind. On that list of traitors to our kind, there was even the Rank 1st Demon Lord, Baal. Special countermeasures were necessary.

“We must group together more firmly than ever before. Until we have tortured the swines that are living idly in the backline, the plains and the mountain ranges are a single world. We must make haste and withdraw to the inner parts of the mountains, but there is no operation more difficult than withdrawing while already being torn to tatters. Even if the two parties have wronged each other, they must forgive one another. Only then can trust finally be established.”

“So? What are you trying to tell me?”

“It is simple, Your Highness.”

I spoke.

“If you had made an attempt at a whimsical ally’s life by poisoning them, then what I am trying to say is that you must start off by lowering your head and giving an apology. How could you be discussing this one’s sins with such a brazen look on your royal countenance?”

Sitri shut her mouth.

A long period of time passed before she opened her smooth lips.

“I do?”

“Yes.”

“To you, Skinnybones?”

“Yes.”

“I’m the Demon Lord of the 12th rank and second-in-command of the Mountain Faction. I have exclusive possession of Big Sis Paimon’s affection.”

“I am aware.”

I know that you are fanatical about Paimon.

“You’re nothing more than rank 71st, and not only have you made a half-breed your fiancée, but you made a human your acting general. If I were to punish you the usual way, then you would have died twice over. You want me to apologize despite that?”

“Apologize despite that.”

I spoke.

“Similar to the time in the past when Her Highness Paimon wept as she apologized in the council chamber of Niflheim despite being the head of the greatest faction in the demon continent.”

“.....”

“Or is Your Excellency’s head heavier than Her Highness Paimon’s?”

The silence continued.

Blood flowed on the ground where the torch was illuminating. The neck of the beheaded corpse was completely gone as if it had simply been deleted, making it appear as if it were never there to begin with. As the blood flowed and soaked Sitri’s feet, it went by the way of her toes and flowed between the bars before pushing its way to where I was seated and pooled underneath me. I was asking her if she was prepared to stand in the same pool of blood as me.

“Skinnybones.”

“Yes?”

“You look quite smart so you should know already by now. I don’t particularly think what I did to you was bad. I don’t feel sorry either.”

“I am aware.”

“The Mountain Faction and the Plains Faction will most likely have to start cooperating from now on. At that time, you’ll become quite important. You’re Barbatos’ sex friend and someone Big Sis Paimon reveres after all. Regardless, my instincts are telling me something. Skinnybones, you, no matter where or how I look at you, you’re nothing more than a **slaughterer who’s simply mad for authority**. It’s to the point that I don’t want to know why Big Sis Paimon regards you highly.”

My word. A slaughterer?

I laughed. I did so louder than earlier. It wasn’t just me. The witches around me had started to giggle as well. Although we all had different throats, the laughter that came out from them easily mixed together. When the laughter blended together, the shadows shone by the torches also danced promiscuously. Sitri was vacantly staring at the sight of us having intercourse with our voices and shadows.

“.....”

“This is, well. Ehem. That is quite. Dear me. It is rather difficult to assure you that I am not that sort of personage. O Your Respectable Honor. I had heard from the rumors that you are an individual who is interested in nothing but martial arts, but it appears you have outstanding observation skills as well.”

“Yup. I know a lot of the things that you don’t know.”

Sitri spoke.

“Even if I apologize to you, I can’t do it sincerely. No, I won’t apologize sincerely. Ever. Do you want to receive my apology despite that?”

“Pardon? I apologize, but I have absolutely no interest in Your Excellency’s sincerity. Did Your Excellency perhaps think that if you apologized sincerely that I would sincerely forgive you? Oh dear.”

The witches laughed.

“Your Excellency. Please think about it cordially. If Your Highness sincerely apologizes to this one, then would this one not have to also sincerely forgive Your Highness? How troublesome is that? I am already suffering due to the threats on my life, but do I now have to even pretend to be sincere? If we warmly apologize and forgive one another, then would the world become beautiful? That beautiful world would be for Your Highness, but would it be for me?”

“.....”

“That is not the type of apology which I am requesting. I am ashamed to say this, but I do not have even the slightest intention to sincerely forgive Your Highness. Whether there is sincerity in the apology or not, that does not change the fact that Your Highness had made an attempt at my life.”

“Then?”

“Get on your knees.”

Kneel.

“Lower your head.”

Bow.

“Utter the words of apology. Endure the ridicule and bear with the indignity. Accept defeat as defeat. Promise me that Your Highness will no longer attack me for a preposterous reason ever again.”

Apologize, endure, bear, accept, and promise.

“And in return.”

In return——.

“Despite being aware of the fact that Your Highness is not being sincere, I will forgive Your Highness.”

“.....”

I will forgive you.

You who had casually tried to kill me.

“I shall believe Your Highness’ promise. Of course, my wariness will not disappear, but why would that matter? Promises are bound to last long if they are bound together with sound suspicion rather than groundless trust.”

Traditionally, this much must be done in order for one to utter ‘Ah, I did well winning’ and beautifully bask in the victory.

How humiliating it is when you have to apologize no matter what even though you do not mean it.

Furthermore, how delightful it is to watch the humiliation of a failure.

As that is what apologies essentially are, it had to be like that. It was only appropriate for the one who is being forgiven to be disgraced and the one who is doing the forgiving to be jovial.

Regardless of whether they knew that or not, the witches held their sides with laughter after hearing my words.

“Yup, Master is…… Master really is, yup…….”

“Crazy”

“Insane.”

“Mental.”

“Overall, he’s our master.”

“He’s crazy and crazy that he’s crazy for three generations and thirty-three generations.”

“How lovely. How adorable. How pretty. With what confidence is His Greater Being so cute? It feels like even if he licks, covets, rams, or violates, he’ll be declared innocent if he goes to trial. Yup. I was perfectly logical just now.”

“You’re a perverted bitch who’s logical.”

“I acknowledge the verdict.”

“But it can’t be helped since he’s a eunuch.”

“Yeah, since he’s a eunuch with single-minded devotion to his attendant, Miss Lazuli.”

“———Finally finiiiiiiiiished!”

“Butt?”

“You bitch?”

“Damn it, I can’t win with shiritori^[1]. They’re crazy bitches after all.”

“In any case, that was a surprise.”

“What have you been scribbling on that parchment since earlier? Do you even know how important the conversation we’re having right now is? For you to be doing something else even though we’re discussing something this important, I can’t believe it.”

“I was composing a song? I had just now finished writing a masterpiece of the century? I had finished my preparation of making everyone piss themselves? Is there a problem? In any case, how important of a conversation was it that you’re acting like that?”

“I don’t know. What were we in the middle of talking about?”

“We were talking about our master being insane.”

“We were talking about our master being a eunuch.”

“Haa? What’s so new about the fact that our master is insane and also a eunuch that you girls are not only babbling about it as if it were important, but also as if it were a situation that could be corrected or changed? More importantly, everyone, I have finally finished the masterpiece that will prove my knowledge of art. Ahaha. If you listen to this and aren’t moved, then not only does that mean you are all lacking in culture, but it may also possibly prove that you all lack a brain. In that regard, you all must naturally listen to my song and be moved. Since no one has ever proved the existence of your brains until now, today, on this day, I shall prove the fact that a brain does indeed exist in your skulls——.”

“No.”

Once that was said, the witches went quiet.

It wasn’t a witch who had said no. It was Sitri.

Sitri stared straight at me and said it again.

“No.”

“.....”

“As I thought, I can’t apologize to you. I can’t. Before quibbling over whether I can or not, yup, I don’t want to. I don’t want to apologize and I don’t want to express my remorse. Why should I?”

Sitri tilted her head slightly and smiled. Her grinning face looked so pure that it felt as if she were innocent since birth.

“Really, why should I? Accept defeat as defeat? Heeh. Skinnybones, you were only locked up for about a week, but have you already gone insane? I have never lost to you, Skinnybones.”

“.....”

“Yeah. I tried to assassinate you. Big Sis Paimon has an unusual interest in you for some reason. But it’s because of that very reason that I had tried to kill you. Me, big sis’ close aide. In any case, even if she has some interest in you——.”

Sitri tilted her head a bit more.

“In the end, the one who is precious to big sis isn’t you but me. If the moment where big sis has to choose either you or me arrives, then she’ll choose me, not you.”

Surely.

She was not a bastard who lived without thinking nor was she a bitch who lived without thinking.

“Ah, you over there.”

“Eh?”

Before the short exchange could even fully happen, Sitri swung her

blade and slashed one of the witches' shoulders. Blood erupted. A cry erupted.

Srrrrck.

The blade part of Sitri's weapon shrank down all on its own. It was a blade that could freely contract and extend. In my life before this, before I was brought to this world, I had seen that blade through my computer monitor.

The Connecting Blade. Rank 12th, Demon Lord Sitri's favorite sword.

Sitri beamed at the witch.

"Hehe. You shouldn't do that. You shouldn't record this. What? Did you plan to record everything and hand the recording over to Big Sis Paimon, like you did before?"

Thud.

Sitri approached the collapsed witch. The witch was flailing about on the ground and continuously groaning in pain. Sitri put her hand inside the witch's clothes, and shortly after, she pulled out an artifact that resembled a pocket watch.

"Uh, huuk……! Kuh, eh……, ……uu, huuh……."

"Reeaally, for you to use something like memoria magic without permission. You can't do that. Dantalian, your witches have really bad habits. Is it perhaps because they weren't educated properly when they were young?"

A blue flame burned. It happened within Sitri's palm. Once the pocket watch was engulfed in the flame, it burned easily. Without even leaving behind a metallic stain, the artifact had crumbled into small particles of ash and floated into the night sky.

"I won't kill her. It seems my subordinates were rude during a

previous occasion after all. Okay. Can we call it even by saying that, by not having killed this witch just now, I had apologized for what I had done previously?”

“.....”

“Skinnybones?”

This woman.

Is declaring war against me.

“Are you truly sorry?”

The torches shined and revealed half of Sitri’s body. Once the torches became shrouded, half of Sitri’s body was buried in darkness. I am uncertain as to whether she was like that since birth or not, the color of Sitri’s hair half resembled fire and half resembled water. Her eyes were also captured half in light and half in darkness. My current appearance is most likely reflecting like that to Sitri as well. I assumed that.

While assuming,

— It will not be easy.

I looked back at the conversation that I once had with Lapis in the past. It was back during the time when I thought that I would have to assassinate Paimon if need be. On that night where we had held a ballot on the Crescent Alliance expedition and led it to its approval, Lapis called Paimon ‘that person’ and warned me.

— Sitri is always by that person’s side.

— Sitri?

— The Rank 12th Demon Lord. If one were to rank them by personal strength, then Rank 2nd Agares is at the highest, Rank 8th Barbatos is second, and after that is Sitri at third. Since she follows that person like an elder sister and does not leave their side for even a moment, it will be difficult for an assassin to get through.

Is that so.

Is she a rabid dog that is always beaming like an idiot but bares her teeth solely for Paimon?

My instincts were noisily raising an alarm in my head. I thought while putting away the alarm.As the head of the Mountain Faction, Paimon led the greatest faction in the demon continent for no less than 400 years. She raised the demon continent on the outside, while, in the background, she secretly established the Republic of Batavia at some out-of-the-way shoreline on the continent ruled by the humans. People have to use their own brain a fair amount even when just trying to maintain two households, but how extremely difficult must it be for a monarch to manage two nations? I am speaking from the heart, but while Demon Lord Paimon's popularity was virtuous, she had somewhat insufficient resources.

.....A **different person** filled that lack of resources and assisted her. Paimon did not inform me that she had some other chancellor like that. The fact that she did not tell me despite it being something that did not need to be hidden, meant that even Paimon did not know she had a chancellor like that.

I carefully examined the woman before me.

It was this bastard.

It was this person, this person whom I didn't know whether to call them this bastard or this bitch, that was secretly assisting Paimon.

Similar to how I indulged in disguising myself as a crazed debauchee by making Lapis my lover and pretended to be the world's stupidest man by making Farnese my acting general.

This fellow, Demon Lord Sitri, voluntarily became a hermaphrodite and habitually committed all sorts of perverted eccentricities.

“.....Hmm?”

In order to plant a prejudice against herself into the people whom she meets and make them disregard her.

“Ehehe. Don't glare at me like that so much, Skinnybones. I said I was sorry, all right? I apologized saying that I was sorry. Honestly, you plotted together with Barbatos and started this war, right? You did all sorts of terrible things! A lot of it!”

The Mountain Faction's shade.

If Paimon was simply a woman who was trying to spread out the sunlight, then this rabid dog in front of me was a girl who only acted in the shade.

“At the lowest, the number of soldiers who had died because of you is in the thousands. Wow, just saying thousands is really..... on the other hand, I just simply tried to poison you alone. And yet, I'm saying sorry to you right now. I feel really conscientious. You'll forgive me, right?”

I answered.

“.....I shall forgive you.”

“Yup, good. We've reconciled now, all right?”

“Yes.”

Nonsense.

“Good. You forgave and I was forgiven. One person was hurt and one person was killed. Although it feels slightly unfavorable for me, well, since Skinnybones is the rather inexperienced protege, I have no other choice but to overlook it as your senior. Hehe. Then let’s continue the trial.”

Sitri took out the piece of parchment that had my sentencing written on it. While she was clearing her throat and getting ready to read, the witches were patching up their injured comrade. Sitri soon began to speak.

“Sinner Dantalian, listen.”

“.....”

“A few days ago, you had basked in the glory of being selected as the representative to give the speech of the Crescent Alliance to announce the start of war…… ah, I’m going to read from the beginning, okay? What am I supposed to do when I forgot where I had left off because some cheeky bitches interrupted me? That’s okay, right, Skinnyhead whom some cheeky bitches call master?”

“Of course.”

I vow. I shall make you kneel down to me.

“Okay.You, however, had dared to nominate the lowly blood of a human and, as a result, you had disgraced your blood allies. Although you are the representative of all of demonkind, since the one you had chosen to act in your place was a human, at the very least, you have thrown away your obligations, and at most, you have sullied the customs of demonkind. Your sin is tremendous.”

I shall make you bow.

“Sinner Dantalian, heed my words once more. The court has closely inspected your past, therefore, it has become clear that you had only committed your crime due to your own foolishness and not because you had borne any ill will towards the Crescent Alliance. Although you may have made a dirty member of humankind into your acting general, the person in question has massacred a countless number of her own kind.”

I shall make you apologize.

“The way of the world asks you whose blood has been passed down to you. However, the customs of the battlefield ask you who you had shed your blood for. Thus, even if the blood one was born with is different in the Crescent Alliance, we are blood allies because that blood flows towards the same place. As your humble-blooded subordinate,

after having inherited the blood of that lowly race,

has served us by adding another vein to our blood allies, is that not also praiseworthy?”

You will have to endure indignity.

“The people of the past once said that dispensing justice and achieving victory cannot be one and the same. However, the council has judged that this is a battlefield. How could one possibly differentiate justice and victory as separate entities in a battlefield? Achieving victory in a war is always as valuable as justice. That is the custom of the battlefield. It would only be appropriate if the broadness of the nature of your crime is counterbalanced by the steepness of your meritorious service in war. That too is the law of the battlefield.”

You will also have to bear with the humiliation.

“When one must first consider the urgency of the battlefield before the way of the world, that is called mercy. If one must rely on mercy while granting amnesty to a sinner, that is solely done in the hopes

that the criminal possesses loyalty. Even if your sins are pardoned, from this point forth, you must be cautious as to not disgrace this mercy and betray our faith.”

You will be unable to endure before you are able to endure at last, and you will have to cope with something that cannot be coped with.

“You must continue to achieve victory and be the one to prove righteousness. You must bear in mind the reason why we are granting you mercy and why we have boundless faith in you.”

Because you will fail irreparably.

“As the defendant has committed their crime in the battlefield, they deserve to be judged according to the customs of the battlefield. Dantalian, as the commanders leading the Crescent Alliance, we, Barbatos of Immortality and Paimon of Benevolence, have hereby made their verdict and it shall be conveyed to you through this Sitri of Devotion.”

Look forward to it, Sitri. I promise you.

“———You are declared not guilty.”

I shall teach you what an apology is.

……Creak.

Sitri opened the iron door of the prison with a key. The witches approached and wiped my body with the towels they had prepared beforehand. Every nook and cranny. As the girls clothed me in my garments, I stayed silent as they cleaned and clothed me like that. Once I was fully in my attire, I put the straw which I had lived together with for the past week behind me and stepped forward.

It was night.

Because the spring rain had left after having disposed of a lot of water, the world was glimmering with moisture during the night. As

what was connecting this side with that side was first darkness and moisture second, it was the torches trembling due to the moisture that came third. Breathing lives and dead lives were emitting steam in the area beyond the shaking torchlight, and Farnese was performing above everything as if she were dancing. On this night where the season solely spread a foul stench, I was discharged.

Sitri grinned.

“Congrats on being discharged.”

I bowed.

“Your grace is immeasurable.”

“Yup. You should know that it’s immeasurable. You go overboard because you don’t know your limit, so if you want to suppress that, you have to be aware of the fact that there is a boundless net spread out above your head. Don’t try to tear it. It won’t tear. It’s a net that has been casted over the history of the Crescent Alliance for 500 years. Don’t raise your head too much. You’ll get caught if you do.”

“.....”

Sitri was pleasantly talking in an affectionate tone. She was smiling in a way that wasn’t excessive or lacking. Similar to how a farmer has no need to swing their plow excessively while cultivating, or how a fisherman has no need to use less strength while gathering, Sitri was not excessive or lacking when pressing her foot down on the thing that was trying to oppose her. It felt as if to Sitri, this was as natural as farmwork was for a farmer.

“Yes, Your Excellency. I will bear that in mind.”

“Ehehe.”

It was at that moment. Sitri reached her hand out and pulled me by my necktie. While forcefully raising my head which I had meekly lowered, Sitri brought her face close to my own. Right in front of my

nose. It was a friable distance where I could feel the opposition's breath around the rim of my eyes.



Sitri quietly whispered in the general area of my eyes.

“———If you act up again, then I’ll make you bite the dust without leaving a single trace, all right, Skinnybones?”

And I, believed that I could vividly see the halves of flames burning in her pupils.

□ **King's Beloved Slave, Berbere Witch Sisters, Captain of the
Royal Guard, Humbaba**
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 10
Polles, Bruno Plains, Army of the Crescent Alliance

Sheesh, hey. Sheesh. I thought I was going to kick the bucket.

As I thought, the aura of high-ranking Demon Lords is something else. Seriously, their aura.

Despite my looks, you know? As I lived my life, you know? I'm a girl who's experienced every fucking thing that can be described as fucked and what happened just a second ago was really fucked. I believed that the O Goddess of All had personally created this single enunciation and presented it to us lowly people exactly for situations like this.

Shit.

“.....”

Master Dantalian was still deep in thought. Even though a fair amount of time had already passed since Sitri had left and it was nearing midnight. If our master goes quiet then we also have to be quiet.

Lord and vassal of one mind. As his loyal subjects, we can't possibly dare to interrupt our master's thinking.

“How difficult. It is abstruse. We must withdraw to the demon continent as soon as possible, but when there is someone among our allies who is still trying to interfere.....”

That was the only thing our master had muttered, and, without saying anything else, he continued to think in silence. He was

definitely plotting an immensely profound scheme that the likes of us couldn't possibly imagine since the contents of our brains were lacking. Yup. I know. I am well aware.

The problem iiiiss, this is damn booooring.

“.....”

“.....”

A dark night.

Only the torches which the guards had set up and abandoned were leisurely burning to nothing. Tic, tic, the sound of sparks flying.....

I could see the lips of my dear fellow witches twitching and wriggling, making it obvious that they wanted to utter nonsense, overflow with bullshit, and make the world vastly tremble both high and low. Aah, fatigue is a scaaary thing. It has a side that is more terrifying than torture. Torture and fatigue even have sides that are parallel to some extent.

The fact they have no end.

The fact they have no bounds.

Ah, truly, the fact that they have no end or bounds.

It's okay. I'm, confident in enduring torture. That's why I'm so good at even playing with boredom.

I reminisce the past whenever this happens. Me, you know, despite how I look, you know, I've experienced a lot of fucked up things as I lived. Since there is no end or bounds when it comes to fuckery, it's the perfect thing to dwell on when bored.

If there's only mud no matter where you place your foot and if there's only muddy water no matter where you shove your mouth, then that means that people have no other choice but to live after

having thrown away a certain amount of their lives somewhere.....there was a senior witch who had once said this while smiling sweetly.

That senior had said that and was burned to death in a plaza.

If we're lowly beings no matter where we go and if we're lowly beings no matter where we head, then let's just become the lowest of beasts and gather all of the gold in the world.....there was a witch who was the same age as me that had said this while cackling.

That witch had said that and died after having all of her limbs torn off in a marketplace.

Aah. I can hear it vividly even nooow.

— Burn all of the witches!

— Those bitches have brought upon us a year of famine! Those, those scoundrels.....!

Sheesh, hey. Sheesh. I thought I was going to kick the bucket.

When I looked around, the other girls were also sullenly lowering their heads.

This is why silence isn't good.

We are allegedly similar to already broken spring watches. If our surroundings are noisy, then we'll bury ourselves inside that clamor and rewind the remainder of our lives with our hour hands, but if they're silent, the meaning of our lives will become nothing more than a ticking racket.

Ah.

I want to do drugs.....

Yeah. I'll probably feel better if I smoke.....

However, since my mind will become sticky like a swamp again if I do drugs, I'll probably end up needlessly spitting out all sorts of words. It's obvious. It was an obvious life. If I do that, then I'll end up interrupting Master Dantalian's train of thought. I don't want that. It was a life I didn't like.

It's night.

The torchlight is bright.

Tic, tic, the sound of sparks being spat out was distinct.

Even the sound of someone killing someone somewhere could be heard rather distinctly. Although there was no particular need to listen carefully to that sound, I naturally ended up listening carefully to it since no one else was making a sound.

Fire. Noise.

Stake.

— Kill them.....

— Burn them!

— Those guys.....

Ah.

Mm.

Hey, hey you there.

There's something I've been curious about. It's something I've been really, immensely curious about.

Have we sinned to such a deep extent?

I know. Yup. I am well aware. You'll get hungry if there's a year of famine. Everything in front of you goes in circles if you get hungry. While everything is going in circles, if there are scoundrels you can throw rocks at and no one will condemn you for it, then, of course, you'd want to throw some rocks. It's human nature.

Whenever a drought or a plague sweeps through the world, the kind known as witches have always been beings that allowed themselves to be stoned a bit and lacerated a bit in the stead of sovereigns at the price of offering their souls to a Demon Lord. If anything, allowing ourselves to be hit by the people who want to throw some stones is the task we have been given and vocation we have been bestowed.

The problem isss, it damn hurts.

— Kill the traitors!

— All of.....

—

Yes.

I wanted to live long.

I admit it.

As it so happens, I was talented with magic?

I was also a girl who was at a good age to be used as a sacrifice?

Aha.

If eternal life is assured as long as His Majesty Demon Lord doesn't die, then I obviously had zero reasons to not form a contract, right? I had dashed to His Highness Marbas who, in the past, had once ruled my homeland and formed a contract with all I had. Well, he's probably forgotten about someone like me by now.

Have we sinned to such a deep extent?

If we had sinned, then it was probably the sin of trying to live a bit longer, but if that's a sin, are all of the people who're living their lives while panting innocent? All right. Let's say that I'm a crazy bitch. What's the relation between a year of famine and me being a crazy bitch? How is me being a crazy bitch related to you guys suffering from a contagious disease and dying in some corner? Fuck.

Shit.

“.....”

That fire.

That tic, tic sound from the fire is the problem.

Why do people always try to burn people who they don't want to see? That's really a problem.

Do I, does she, do we have to actually say that it hurts when we are burned in order for us to prove that we are also the same living and breathing beings as you? Do we have to confirm our lives with our pain?

— You are a bunch who should not have been born into this world.

— Is there truly no feeling of sorriness for the lives of others in your minds?

Paimon.

Aah, what benevolent words.

Her Highness. Indeed. We also think that we are a race that should have not been born into this world. Sheesh, hey. Sheesh. Even if we scream out that we are in pain, it must be quite comfy for you, since to you, we are a completely different kind. Those words are correct. What does it matter?

Truly, who will 相關^[2] with us?

Drugs are good.

Drugs, are physical things that block mental things.

I smoked when I wanted to smoke and made money. I killed when I wanted to kill people and earned money. Let's pass this life smoking and killing, let us girls, who no one will associate with, gather together and play. If no one will associate with us, that means that we don't have a world to associate with either. If that is the case, then we just have to go wherever our bodies lead us and die with a bang.....there was a witch who had said this while giggling.

It was me.

I'm still alive after having said that.

— I will give you the remaining half once the task is completely over.

Ah.

Really. Ehem. That's really.

For someone like a Demon Lord to cheaply mess around with money..... Ehei, ei. You shouldn't do that. How can someone called the Demon Lord of Benevolence be such a cheapskate? If someone behaves that cheaply, then even the likes of us won't stay still.

— Dantalian had personally wiped the dirt off of you all earlier today, and yet, you all had betrayed that Dantalian. Do I have even the slightest reason to place my trust in you?

Mm.

Weeell.

Hm.

Ahahah?

That's right.

There's no doubt.

Her Highness is right.

It's okay, it's okay. There's absolutely! No problem at all. If a person has betrayed another, then it's only natural that they should be betrayed in return. That's the moral principles of the world.....! The moral principles of all creation.....! As expected of a Demon Lord who rules over everything in the world, their words are mysterious and marvelous..... Ahah! Even if the likes of us are peasants who live huddled up in the shade of some alleyway..... since we go around calling ourselves witches, since we are eternal subjects to Their Majesties Demon Lords who are the lords of all of demonkind..... how could we possibly disobey the voice of a king, how.....?

Why?

Why don't they save us?

"....."

"....."

No.

Wait.

I mean..... mm, no. I don't like this feeling. When I looked around, the other girls were also bunching up their shoulders. This is why silence isn't good. Furthermore, the environment wasn't good.

Darkness. Fire.

The sound of fire.

The sound of slaughter and death.

This isn't good.

Objectively.

It's already been several hundred years, so I don't remember that well, but despite my looks, you know, I was once a talented individual who was living a promising life as an up-and-coming mage. It's necessary for mages to have the refinement to look at themselves objectively. I have a damn good memory as well.

From an objective point of view.

Witch Humbaba, as a witch who has lived for over 300 years, if a normal person could live for 300 years, then they would have increased their knowledge by reading books and would most likely be a prominent scholar or something even more by now, but, ah, surprisingly, this bitch had put all of the time she was given into sexual relations and drugs.

All right.

It worked well.

This, it's uncertain whether it's because of this bitch's innate indecisiveness or because of her acquired drug addiction, but if there's one thing that's certain, then———my dear fellow witches———this woman called Humbaba has proved how far a person can fall into being trash and, at the same time, has also proved the fact that a brain doesn't particularly exist that much in her own skull. Isn't that impressive?! Ladies, please consider the fact that it's quite difficult for a person to prove even a single truth in their lifetime. Humbaba has really made a tremendous achievement!

Objectively.

Even if you look at it objectively, my life is.

“.....”

Honestly.

Ladies, I honestly think that mankind should someday applaud this insane witch. Ah, this girl's life is like getting two birds with one stone where she achieves a gwan bak^[3] in a pi bak^[3]. You ladies are also well aware, right? Because you ladies as well, although it may not be to the same extent as this witch, are also bitches who have beautifully accepted your lives in the trash like this witch has, right? The reason why the old saying 'birds of a feather flock together' isn't wrong——.

Even if you look at it objectively, my life is fucked up.

.....

It's hot.

Fuck.

.....

It's probably this way because it hasn't been long since the spring rain had ended. The moisture is really at the level of being steam, sheesh, hey. Sheesh.

Shit.

.....

Swamp.

The world is sticky like a damn swamp.

What my senior had said was right. There's only mud no matter where you place your foot and there's only muddy water no matter where you shove your mouth. I had thrown my life away there. Yup. So what?

.....

Who.

Who will save us here?

Those people, they aren't torturing us because they're especially bad scum..... I know. I am well aware. But they still set us ablaze. They burned us well. That's quite the problem. The fact that the people who burned us aren't especially bad scum.....

The fact that there is no end.....

The fact that there is no bounds.....

Ah, truly, the fact that there is no end or bounds.....

.....

Shit.

.....,

.....,

.....,

Ah

It seems, I dozed off a bit.

When I looked around, the other witches were also twisting their bodies. Seeing how the night was still dark, it seems that time hadn't flowed by that much. But why was I..... is the thought that went through my head before I turned my head to see Master Dantalian still deep in thought without moving even an inch.

Ah, that's right.

I can't interfere with our master's contemplating.

Wow.

Even I have to admit that there's no loyal subject as impressive as us. My word. That's why, even though it feels like not that much time had passed, it means that I managed to resist my urge to do drugs for that long. I admit it. Since I've managed to hold myself back this much, wouldn't Master tolerantly forgive me even if I started smoking right now? Yup..... I'm certain. Because.

— I heard that you girls betrayed me. Why did you do it?

Because Master is a loose individual.

Because, the reason why, is because we were starving for gold. Master. Because we got greedy.

The more gold you have, the better. They say that the people who don't have to worry about the safety of tomorrow will not be avaricious, but since us humble witches are not in a position where

we can rest easy over tomorrow, we are always greedy. That is the livelihood of the people who live in an alleyway while poorly lowering themselves. How could hoping for tomorrow be excessive avarice? Are the likes of us, in truth, living undeserved lives, or is life itself something that the likes of us don't deserve in the first place? Is it excessive greed for the likes of us to want to live?

— Oh, these imbeciles.

— Since you all have gone against the military order, you must pay the penalty. Bring a cutting board. I will cut a single finger from all of you.

Master.

Our master.

— Since your lifespans are long, you will one day meet your life-long partner. Even if that life-long partner were to confess their love and propose to you, you now no longer have the finger to put a ring on. You are forever crippled. Repent in dust and ashes for the foolishness of not having cherished a bond and having hastily betrayed it. You will understand this feeling when you meet the one you love.

Ah.

Mm.

.....,

If no one will associate with us anyway, then we too will have no

world to associate with, so we can throw the world away with ease, but now my fellow witches are tilting their heads at the world they had already half-abandoned.

There, is nothing but Hell if you go there……I could not tell them this.

If we're lowly beings no matter where we go and where we head, then we should just become the lowest of beasts. However, because there is someone who has made us a part of their family, my comrades are letting go of their gold pouches one by one.

Girls, are you okay with letting go of even those? Really? Do you have the confidence to cross the world, without even those……I could not worry about them like this.

Because I was already in this state and shape.

I couldn't possibly tell them. Worry about them.

———Swamp.

The world is sticky like a damn swamp,

and my ankles are still sticky because of the swamp.

I want to get out of this, but it's not that easy. Even if I freed myself, what the world would be like after my freedom, what it could become, and who it could become, I didn't know these things. I don't know.

This was what I simply didn't know.

“Humbaba.”

“.....”

“Humbaba.”

“.....”

“Hey. Captain of the Royal Guard. Oh, what is this? Look here. I am calling out to you, but why are you not answering? Hey. You damned girl. Humbaba.”

Plop.

“.....Acho?”

My head felt something weird. It seems that something which wasn't particularly solid or particularly squishy had hit the back of my head. When I looked to confirm what it was, it turned out to be a person's eyeball.

“Hoi?”

Well, that's if you can call the single eyeball that had come out of a head all on its own and had strongly exerted its presence a person's eyeball.

What is this supposed to be?

I couldn't possibly imagine how uglier it could be if this disgustingly dirty-looking thing was inside the mug of a living person. I'm deducing that this is probably the eye of an exceedingly noisy bastard. I don't know why he died, but I'm definitely certain that he kicked the bucket because he deserved to die.

“Oi, look here.”

“Ah. Yes, Master?”

Before I knew it, I had answered instinctively.

Once I turned my gaze, I saw that our master was rolling a clot of blood in his left hand. If I lowered my gaze a sliiiight bit, I could see some guy's decapitated corpse lying dead on the ground and if you examined him a bit more carefully, then, if you excluded his lack of a neck, he was mostly normal-looking except for a single thing. The only notable thing about him was the fact that he was missing a

single eye on his face.

Dear God.

“.....Master. Dooon’t tell me, did you pluck an eyeball from a corpse and throw it at me just so you could wake me up a second ago?”

“I did not pluck it. It came out of the corpse on its own, girl. Are you trying to draw me out into being some mental patient?”

“In any case, that still means you did actually throw that eyeball. Dear God. Dear Lord. Even if you list every item that could be used to wake someone up and spread them out before you, I don’t think a person’s eyeball would be a part of that list, and yet, of all things, that was what Master had thrown. In short, it means that Master is an individual who has diverged greatly from the realm of common sense.”

Ah.

I’m talking to someone.

I feel happy.

“Furthermore, this one refers to people who have diverged greatly from the realm of common sense as perverts. In that regard, tadaah, it has become proven that Master is a pervert. Ahahah. Didn’t this one end the demonstration quite spectacularly?”

“”Huwaa..... what?”

“What do you mean what?”

“It seems our master has finally finished thinking, yeah?”

“It seems our master has finally been proven to be a pervert, yeah?”

“Instead of saying that it was finally proven, I feel like you should say that it was proven once more. One plus one equals two, but people don’t say that they’ve finally proved it when they do that

equation. In short, it means that within the world of truth, one plus one equals two is an equation that has been worn out so much that it's like a whore. Similarly, in our physical world, our master's perverseness is nearly on the level of a whore, and could possibly be a proposition that is even more worn out than that. Wow. I was perfectly logical just now."

"What? Master's whoreness has finally been proven?"

"The fact that it's difficult to discuss the truth with these fellows isn't even remotely surprising. They're crazy bitches after all."

The other witches started to chatter away as well. Ah, it can't be helped, these girls have a terminal illness where they'll die if they don't rattle on after all.

Our master let out a big sigh.

"Humbaba. It seems I will have to live a bit more busily from now on. I shall alleviate my busyness somewhat by utilizing you girls, so heed my command."

Master's order.

I had to smile as prettily as I could.

"Yes, Master. Please command uss."

"At the least, you have lived for several decades, and at the most, you have wasted your time for 300 years. You should have made quite the name for yourselves even among your fellow witches and you should also have rather heavy personal connections."

"Yes, that is the case?"

"Send a familiar to every witch that you know."

Our master spoke.

"I shall make a home for you all."

“.....”

“I do not have the time to handle every little thing that either Elizabeth or Sitri does. I intend to deal with everything all at once. I plan to drop all of that into a pot as we withdraw into the mountains. At that time, I intend to use you girls with care, and in return, I shall promise you all a home.”

“.....”

“So busy. Things will become quite hectic.”

Master started to mutter to himself as if he had fallen into thought once more.

“For starters, I will have to go and secure the mind of that daughter of mine over there who is pounding away at those keys. It is my damned fate. I will persuade Barbatos and Paimon while I am on the way…… I see this will be a battle of speed. We will have to earnestly push ahead. Although there is the issue of how we are going to pack up the supplies. Ehem, that will work out somehow…….”

Plop.

Master threw the last remaining eye of the beheaded corpse and it landed in a puddle of mud. The mud that had scattered into the night air was illuminated by the burning torches for a moment. If seeing things is the duty of an eye, then that is probably something raw that has not fulfilled its duties. The eyeball let out an audible sound as it rolled through the pool of mud before coming to a halt.

Forever.

“Humbaba.”

“Yes, Master?”

“I heard that in order to become a witch, one must form a contract with a Demon Lord. Which Demon Lord did you form a contract

with?”

“Uh……. It was Demon Lord Marbas. A noble personage. Albeit this one had formed the contract around 300 years ago and was already liberated 200 years ago.”

“Liberated?”

“Yes. That, uhm……. The Black Death has been going around since last year, right? That wasn’t the only time something like that had happened. Massive plagues and years of famine occasionally happen, and every time they do, regardless of their race, all of demonkind get really damn upset. Despite that, things like this are natural disasters. Since nothing could be done.”

They made it so that something could be done.

By creating a sacrificial sheep, they turn them into the very first person to have brought the plague from the outside and spread it. They are also turned into the heretics who had committed an impious crime towards the Gods and brought a drought to the land.

That is the origin of witches.

Originally, it was the Greater Beings, in other words, the Demon Lords who would have to take the role as ‘the ones responsible’.

But that is impossible.

Demon Lords are sacred and inviolable representatives that symbolize absolute dignity. In other words, lords that command all of demonkind. The various plagues and years of famine that happen down on the earth are unrelated to the lords. If there’s someone in the wrong, then it’s most likely someone else, and if there is no one else, then, well, just make one.

Condemned, slandered, tortured, and a double helping of torture.

In order to pacify the people who had died during an epidemic and

the people who had fallen during a year of famine. Peasants that were contracted for the sole purpose of being tortured. That's what we witches are. We also think that we're quite the amazing political tools.

Someone has to take responsibility anyway.

Someone does.

Imagine the town square being serene like any other day even though your old mother had passed away due to the plague. You'd be angry. That's why, when the state of affairs is chaotic, there has to always be at least one witch tied up in a town square for a territory to be somewhat managed properly.

The demon society is superior thanks to this. This fact is clear if you look at how the debased humans have had to change their society constantly, while us demons had no need to flip our society over for the past millennia. We may be peasants, you know, in spite of our appearances, you know, we're peasants who serve the lords of demonkind. Even if we're similarly peasants, it'll hurt our pride a bit if you compare us to half-breeds.

Ahaha.

I do admit it's a bit fucked up.

"Yes. Liberated. When we form a contract with a Demon Lord, we normally do so after setting a contract period. This one had acted as a sacrifice for 150 years before I was liberated and allowed to live however I pleased afterward. Aha, since the rest of this one's life was assured after having been tortured for barely more than 100 years, this one.....believes, it.....was a profit."

I closed my mouth.

Since Master's eyes weren't really smiling.

I slowly opened my mouth while thinking about what I should say.

“.....It’s the same for everyone else, you know?”

Master’s eyes still weren’t smiling.

Was that the wrong answer?

“It’s the low and humble task that we had carried out because we had chosen to do so, you know?”

Wrong answer.

“150 years is actually appropriate. Because there are Demon Lords who hit witches and witches who hit Demon Lords, 150 years is appropriate and it seems everyone has also accepted this. You see Euryale over there? She’s the worst of the worst. She had formed a contract that lasted for 220 years.”

Wrong answer.

“Doesn’t the way of the world all roughly go by like that?”

Wrong answer.

Wrong answer.

Wrong answer.

“.....”

A stillness fell over us.

Our master looked around carefully. Witches who were inherently part of the Berbere Witch Sisters. New witches who had joined us last winter. Adding them all up, a total of forty-one witches were gazing blankly at our master.

Forty-one.

Forty-one vestiges of plagues and years of famine.

Forty-one curses.

“.....”

Master Dantalian looked at me.

With his eyes that remained black even when illuminated by the light.

“I shall gift to you, my witches, a domain.”

“.....”

“Will you follow me?”

I believed that I overheard eternity from that sound.

□ King's Beloved Sword, Human, Laura De Farnese
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 10
Polles, Bruno Plains, Army of the Crescent Alliance

—

This young lady had no way of knowing when her performance had begun.

However, there was one thing that was certain. Sweat. Sweat was flowing down the nape of this young lady's neck. The sweat was prominently distinct.

When sweat trickled down the nape of this young lady's neck, it was like the flickering of a snake's tongue. It left its mark as it lengthily flowed down, and as it lengthened, it extended time. It was a time that extended from the nape of this young lady's neck and down to her back. Instead of flowing in time, the drops of sweat felt as if they were gathering up time on this young lady's body as they attempted to crawl through the world and pierce through it.

This young lady was performing. After the drops of sweat had flowed down, it was then and only then that time seeped into the long line mark which they had left behind. This young lady's time branched into many different paths and gathered at the small of this young lady's back.

This young lady pressed down on the piano keys.

—!

An electric shock occurred. This young lady was soaked. Electricity easily surged through the small of this young lady's back as it was drenched in sweat. As the drops of sweat pooled and everything spread as electricity flowed through the place where time was staggering along, it felt as if this young lady was living a life solely through electricity.

This young lady pressed down on the piano keys once more.

—!

This young lady's heart pounded. Thump, the sound of heartbeats resonated more dully than this young lady's dull ears. What is this? What could this be? How cute it is..... This young lady pressed down on the keys again. Thump..... A pulse spread throughout this young lady's time. As this young lady felt as if she were living her life while the pulse was spreading, this young lady felt as if her life was simply a life that lived through the sound of heartbeats.

Solely like electricity.

Simply the sound of heartbeats.

—,!

—! ...,!

Screams kept erupting around me.

However, were those really screams? Could they not have been

shouts of excitement? As this young lady was infected by excitement as those people continued to scream, those were undoubtedly shouts of excitement and not merely screams. So shout more. Scream louder. Although this young lady had no way of knowing when her performance had begun, this young lady will perform while always swallowing your screams with a snake's maw.

Always.

Give this young lady time. This young lady will willingly be shocked.

Give this young lady life. This young lady will gladly shed blood.

And.....,

And.....,

And.

Step.

And, this young lady heard the sound of footsteps. Perhaps this young lady had felt it instead of having heard it. This young lady was uncertain as to which it was. Similar to how even if you close your eyes you can still distinctly feel when a finger is approaching your eye due to an electrical current-like sensation, this young lady felt as if the footsteps were heartbeats. Because the sound of footsteps was headed towards this young lady.

The footsteps approached. Step..... As it quietly approached, the sound of footsteps left ripples on the surface of the melody that this young lady had spread out. The sound of footsteps was directed straight at this young lady. Who was it? Someone is coming to this young lady. Who could they be to be approaching this young lady?

Do they know where this is? Are they coming here while aware of who this young lady is?

This young lady, this young lady had dug into books to such an extent because she wanted to accept all of the sounds that approached her. This young lady hoped that among the things she had accepted there would be someone's voice. However, as the sound of footsteps was not the language of Sardinia, the language of Habsburg, the language of Francia, the language of Anatolia, the language of Castile, the language of Brittany, the language of Batavia, the language of Tueton, the language of Bernicia, the language of Moscow, or the language of Kalmar, it felt as if this young lady, who was well-versed in every language, could not master the sound of footsteps.

The sound of footsteps did not have their own nationality and it felt as if there were no borders which they could not cross. How could one possibly put a border on the sound of someone approaching another? How.....?

Step.

They are approaching again. They are approaching one step at a time. Each time the footsteps approached, this young lady intuitively felt that her song was ending. The sound of footsteps pulled the melody like a net to this young lady's ankles and drew near. The world shrunk each time that approached. Ah. Another step.

Behind this young lady's back.

Directly behind her.

After stroking the back of this young lady's neck.

"Farnese."

A breath touched this young lady's ear.

"It is time for you to wake up from your performance."

And this young lady opened her eyes.

It was then that this young lady realized that she had been closing her eyes.

"....."

Once this young lady raised her head and looked around, the very first thing to pierce this young lady's eyes was the light. It was only after that did the shade of the night sweep over. That is so. It was late in the night. Was this not strange? This young lady had started her performance only a short while ago and the sky at that time was definitely a mixture of both red and blue and not a dark gray.

"It seems you have been enjoying yourself quite a lot."

The sound of laughter came from behind. This young lady turned around. His Lordship was standing there.

"Milord."

"What is it?"

".....What time is it?"

"It is just past midnight."

The noise that was occurring around this young lady gradually became clear. Demons were being decapitated here and there. It was the scene of a purge. Barbatos and Paimon were seated on judgment seats like a pair of judges, and each time a verdict fell, the neck of a criminal would fall as well. This young lady's surroundings were unfamiliar to her, making it feel as if she were a foreigner who had suddenly been placed in an unfamiliar place of exile.

"Milord."

This young lady felt relaxed each time she uttered this word. It was a comfortable enunciation. Although this young lady did not know what the current time was and where she was at, regardless of the time and where this was, the eyes that were gazing at this young lady were His Lordship's eyes and the hand that was stroking this young lady's head was His Lordship's hand.

The world was originally Hell and as there was no path to disimprisonment from there, this young lady realized that within this world that was Hell, the only place where you could reach disimprisonment for a moment was between people. Ah. Hell was a sea of fire and there was an island between people.

“Milord.”

If this young lady called out to the island like this.

“Yes?”

An echo came back to her.

Aah.

His Lordship was originally a person who had been banished from the world and exiled to an uninhabited island. This young lady had thought that. Once that thought came to mind, that thought felt much too right. If that island was still called 無人^[4] even if His Lordship was by himself on that isle, it feels as if the island could still be called a 無人島^[4] even if His Lordship and this young lady were both on the island together.

This young lady had obtained a home.

It was this young lady's first home since she was born.

“.....Milord.”

“Are you broken somewhere? Why are you helplessly saying ‘milord, milord’ over and over again? Yes. I am your lord, and you

lad, are my acting general. As it is your broken life, it is all my lack of virtue.”

“It would be more right to refer to this young lady as a lass and not a lad.”

“So those are going to be your first words? What a spiteful fellow. It is not even remotely surprising that the first words out of your mouth are not proper words at all.”

This young lady opened her mouth.

“This young lady has completely basked in all of the beauty which she can enjoy in the world just now. Milord. Please take this young lady’s life right now.”

“.....”

“This young lady wishes to be strangled to death by Your Lordship’s hands.”

The smile on His Lordship’s face subsided. His eyes that resembled the night sky were staring intently at this young lady. Due to there being a surface on His Lordship’s pupils, which is something that cannot be found in the night sky, this young lady was being reflected on that black surface. Tears were flowing down this young lady’s face.

Press.

His Lordship pressed his finger between this young lady’s eyes. The area where his finger touched was a bit hot. The heat flowed in an arch as it followed the outline of his finger.

“Farnese.”

“Yes?”

“Are you a corpse or a doll?”

“.....”

That was the curse which the Imperial Princess of the Habsburg Empire had spat at this young lady a few days ago. As this young lady could not answer this question by herself, she had asked His Lordship, however, he too did not answer and gave this young lady a question in return.

His Lordship spoke.

“Are you not a person?”

“.....”

“Do you wish to die?”

This young lady buried her face into His Lordship’s chest.

Heated substances continued to flow.

This young lady was drenched.

“This young lady wants to live…… to live on, Your Lordship. This young lady, wishes to live……. It keeps hurting…… it is this painful, and yet…… why, does this young lady want to continue living…… why…….”

“Yes. I knew that you were dreadful the day I laid my eyes on you for the first time.”

His Lordship stroked this young lady’s head.

This body which the Imperial Princess had cursed.

“Live.”

The Demon Lord baptized this young lady.

“I shall make you live.”

This young lady slowly blacked out as she was buried in His Lordship’s embrace.

And as she blacked out,
this young lady believed that she should continue to live.

□ **Demon Lord of Honor, Rank 5th, Marbas**
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 10
Polles, Narew River Valley

It was late in the night.

The Demon Lords were silent. Even when they spoke, the Demon Lords did so while not looking at one another, but by simply staring absent-mindedly at the candlelight placed on the table.

My subordinates wordlessly watched the sight of yellow candle drippings flowing down the side of the candle and landing on the table. Although candle drippings flowing down was a trivial occurrence, as it was an incredibly obvious happening, it felt like no one here could hinder or stop it.

“Your Highness. It appears that the confidential letter was true…….”

A commander spoke up in a low voice. His countenance appeared as if he were ashamed.

It was not just him alone. All of the Demon Lords who were gathered under the flag of the Neutral Faction were pitifully muttering something. As they could not speak their minds to someone else, their mutterings were closer to being monologues.

“I cannot believe it. Did they truly purge 7 Demon Lords?”

“Ehem, Barbatos may be that sort of personage, but for even Paimon to…….”

“What do they intend to do with the troops that were led by the people who were purged?”

A countless number of soldiers were being executed at Bruno Plains.

That was what was written in the confidential letter. Hundreds of our fellow demons were either being hung to death at the gallows or were already dead.

The scenery of execution was especially cruel as the lives of the humble and the lives of the nobles were not distinguished and were instead tied together, this was also mentioned in the confidential letter. It was a letter that was sent by a person whom I had known for a long time, so it was undoubtedly true.

“.....”

Normally, as the leader of a single army, it was my duty to recover the morales of my subordinates. However, it was difficult for even me to escape this silence.

Gusts of wind shook throughout the night sky and let out a bleak sound. As the wind shook, it felt as if the distant foul scent of corpses had been harbored and was being carried over. I simply trembled in anger. All of that foul scent had burst out during my absence.

“What should be done, Your Highness?”

The Demon Lord who had a rough beard and was also the one who had worked together with me in the battlefield spoke in a hoarse voice.

“Barbatos is a violent, closed-minded person. However, when the Crescent Alliance raises its flag with the natural bones of our soldiers, Barbatos is always much more respectable. It was reported that Barbatos and Paimon had joined hands yesterday and punished our fellow Crescent Alliance comrades, but I am certain that they were most likely not comrades, but traitors. If they were traitors, then the reason to rebuke Barbatos would be unmerited. Would it not be wrong to clash arms against our own kind?”

I questioned him.

“What if they were not traitors?”

“.....”

“What if they were traitors? Would that also not be a problem? Would that not mean that starting from Baal, the other Demon Lords in the backline are all traitors of the demon continent?”

“.....”

“If the already dead 7 Demon Lords were not traitors, then we will have to punish Barbatos and Paimon, and if they were traitors, then we will now have to turn our war horses around and punish the Demon Lords in the rear. It would all be the flesh of demonkind even if we cut down what is in front of us and even if we cut down what is behind us. You stated that we should not clash arms against our own kind, but who are the ones who are forcing us to do this? Is it not Barbatos and Paimon?”

“.....”

Bang!

I could not hold back my rage any longer and slammed the table as I stood up.

“Are Barbatos and Paimon sane?! Are they not beheading our comrades because they are sane?!”

The Demon Lords warily glanced at one another. However, there was no one who would answer that question. By avoiding my gaze and not answering my question, they wanted for my wrath to flow by naturally.

They were foolish.

By erasing their gazes and their answers, would that also erase the

scenery which had unfolded due to the executions on the other side of the plains? Even if the sun rises today as it had yesterday, would the blood that had already been shed on the earth all evaporate?

“Fine. It is fine now. Order our troops to advance. I shall personally go and reprimand Barbatos and Paimon.”

“Advance……? Your Highness, what do you mean……?”

My subordinates could not hide their anxiety and had started to panic.

“Not even a day has passed…….”

“Your Highness. The Mountain Faction and the Plains Faction are the main forces of our allies. How could we possibly point our spears forward and approach them? Your Highness’ words are distressful. Please consider matters once more.”

“I do not consider the bandits who have beheaded our comrades as allies.”

“Your Highness!”

My men were startled.

Once I stated that I was going to drive into the military headquarters of the Crescent Alliance while accompanied by my troops, the ones who could not answer my questions earlier started to hastily blurt out lines. Although the area was silent as the forest exuded a thick scent of pine, solely the Demon Lords were in a rush.

“The humans are encamped across the Bruno Plains, so we will ultimately face utter defeat if our forces were to fight among themselves now. We have committed a grave crime by losing once during the winter. How will we endure the sin this time? Your Highness, please.”

“As we cannot know why Paimon had punished those seven

Demon Lords since we have not carefully listened to her reason, if there were a cause, then should we not hear it first? She is not a lady who would act without reason. Since she has apparently beheaded those people under the pretext that they were traitors, then there must definitely be an incentive. Your Highness, please show some discretion.”

.....No, these fellows. Are these fellows afraid?

I turned my head and glanced at the commanders. From what I could tell, it seems they were cowering at the news that the Plains Faction and the Mountain Faction had joined hands.

“Do you intend to disobey?”

I glared at my subordinates. Once they met my gaze, they automatically shut their mouths. Although my subordinates had several mouths, the silence they all emitted had fused together and made the air around us heavier and heavier.

“If need be, we are capable of furthering our connections with the rear, but they cannot. Even if the supply lines are cut, it would be theirs that would be cut first. Even if they intend to withdraw, they will have to do so while shaking off the pursuit of the humans, but do you think we will simply watch over that? This is a military order from the leader of the army. Do as I tell you without question.”

The commanders lowered themselves to the ground. A commander who did not state his official rank remonstrated in a sorrowful voice as he stuck his nose close to the ground.

“Your Highness. At the very least, please allow them to have a single day for a leave of absence. Bestow them a day and allow them to beg for forgiveness and apologize. Even if we must fight when one occurs, we must maintain a mature appearance if we are to be honorable in the future.”

“.....”

A single day of absence.

Truly, even if we grant them a day or two, are they fellows who would wear white mourning gowns and ask for expiation? This was something which I did not ask my men. I was aware that they were not that sort of monarch, and my subordinates were aware of that as well. However, my subordinates were pleading to me with hoarse voices that I should play my part with honor.

Honor towards those who have beheaded one's comrades, is it.....?

I, suddenly felt exhausted and sat back down. Once I covered my eyes with my hand, I felt my thick skin pressing against the palm of my hand. It was my skin that had been swept and had swelled over the ages.

“.....I understand. At the least, a single day is most likely what the value of being on the same battleground as them for the past several centuries is. I shall write a separate letter and send it to them. You all may leave and get some rest.”

“Thank you, Your Highness.”

“One day.”

I cut my words short and spat them out.

The commanders froze.

“Once midnight passes tomorrow, we shall immediately round up our war horses and strike them. Bear in mind that although you may rest in your quarters today, it is solely a rest in preparation for the night attack. Inform the soldiers of this as well.”

“As you command.”

The commanders left the tent one by one with their backs lowered. Before long, the only ones to remain in the tent were myself and a couple of servants who assisted this body.

“.....”

Through the cracks between my fingers, I gazed at the entrance of the tent which was shaking due to the wind. A sentry was setting up a torch. The torches sharply surged upwards like a sharpened blade and split the darkness. However, as there was still darkness no matter how much it was severed and cut, in the end, instead of saying that the torch was slicing something, it looked more as if it were endlessly screaming at something.

Aah.

Once I wrote the letter, I spread open the piece of parchment and lamented.

Barbatos. Paimon.

For what actual cause have you done this?

Translator's Notes

1. [↑] Shiritori is a game where you say a word that begins with the final letter in the word that was said previously. So here it was 완서어어어영 (wanseoecoeoeong)->영덩이 (eongdeong-i)->이년이 (inyeon-i).
2. [↑] 相關 – Associate/Relate.
3. [↑] ‘**gwan bak**’ and ‘**pi bak**’ are terms used in a Korean card game called ‘Go-Stop’[\[Wikipedia\]](#). The move referenced here is a move that x4 your points.
4. [↑] 無人 – No person. 無人島 – Uninhabited isle.
5. I’d like to note that those black pages were made like that on purpose. It’s supposed to have 0 spaces and 0 punctuations and the text is supposed to be nearly invisible. It’s exactly like this in the book as well, so translating that section was quite the experience. Good luck trying to piece together the words and sentences. You can try if you want, but you don’t really have to. These pages will come out again later on, but it’ll be more distinct at that time so you can read it properly then. I’ll post a pastebin of it as well when it comes out. I’m not going to provide it now since this is supposed to be a progressive experience. I had to struggle when I first read through it and so do you guys! Share the experience 100%

Furthermore, you may have noticed some Chinese letters in places, but the author had also done this on purpose. Most authors usually write the Korean word and then the Chinese characters in parenthesis next to it, but Yoo Heonhwa wrote only the Chinese characters in those parts, hence why I did the same. It’s a stylistic thing.

Chapter Two

Disimprison

□ The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 11
Polles, Bruno Plains, Army of the Crescent Alliance

“You know the old saying ‘Know thyself’? Dantalian, I believe that this proverb roughly translates to this.”

Barbatos spoke.

“When you’re screwed, you must quickly realize the fact that you’re screwed.”

I nodded.

“That is correct. What is important is how fast you realize this. However, the issue is, Your Excellency Barbatos, is that in order to know whether you are currently screwed or not, you must have had the experience of it beforehand. If one has not already experienced being screwed, then they will either end up being incapable of realizing that they are in a screwed situation, or even if they do realize it, they will realize a step too late. Therefore, in order to know thyself, you must experience being screwed many times.”

“Hm. If you consider the fact that I’ve experienced an incredible amount of screwed up situations in my life, I can’t really disagree with you there.”

Barbatos nodded.

“Continue.”

“Yes, Your Excellency. In conclusion, the term ‘Know thyself’ roughly translates to ‘Be screwed as many times as possible’. However, what is the reason we are trying to listen to proverbs in the

first place? Is it not precisely because we do not wish to be screwed? Not only is the proverb ‘Know thyself’ meaningless, but it also destroys the meaning of existence for proverbs themselves. You could also say that it is the most worthless proverb in the world.”

“Dantalian. You’re reasonably good at sex and your face isn’t that bad either, so you have a lot of talents, but among your many many talents, the talent you’re best at is your technique to disguise bullshit so it doesn’t sound like bullshit. Even if the most nonsensical bullshit in the world were to flow through your tongue, it would sound like rubbish that is somewhat worth listening to, or it might even sound like trash that is really worth listening to. I, Barbatos, Rank 8th Demon Lord and the lord who boasts immortality, acknowledges this fact. Your smooth talking is easily on the level of being extraordinary.”

“I am honored, Your Excellency.”

Paimon, who was quietly listening to our conversation from the side, appeared as if her mind was blanking out. She then muttered.

“.....What exactly are you two currently discussing?”

We both turned to look at Paimon.

“Nothing, whore.”

“Nothing, Your Highness.”

We then turned back to each other and continued.

“If you think about it, proverbs aren’t particularly useful. Proverbs are, in other words, pieces of advice that were made to be useful to as many people as possible, right? Then that means tons of people already know about these proverbs, and in the end, proverbs provide us with pieces of advice that you, I, and everyone else already know, so there’s no actual need for these pieces of advice in the first place.”

“Your words are reasonable beyond measure, Your Excellency.”

“Let’s say that I had said that the last thing which you can trust the most is money. If you simply listen to this line, then you’ll probably think that this is a somewhat obvious fact. However, if I were to splendidly write **‘The last thing man can trust the most is money’** and engrave this line into a pillar of a temple, then not only would this strangely sound like it wasn’t obvious, but because it feels obvious at a glance, it’ll instead appear as if it didn’t sound obvious at all. I, Barbatos, Rank 8th Demon Lord and the most distinguished lord in the demon continent, present this opinion. Are proverbs not all like this?”

“Surely. As expected of Your Excellency Barbatos. A wisdom that befits the lord who boasts immortality and is also the most distinguished Demon lord. Lowly foot soldiers would have no other choice but to stand in awe at Your Excellency’s insight. Let me try testing it out as well. **You cannot win a war with tired soldiers, more so with hungry soldiers.**”

“The enemy of my enemy is my ally.”

“If you think that you are an idiot, then you actually are an idiot.”

“Play. You will have fun.”

“Live. If you really want to live.”

Paimon looked at us with a face that appeared blanker than earlier.

“This lady has no idea what the two of you have been doing since earlier…….”

“Paimon is a whore.”

“This damn bitch……?”

Paimon struck Barbatos’ left cheek. Barbatos kicked Paimon’s right shin. Paimon struck Barbatos once more. Barbatos kicked Paimon once more. The space was then infinite.

10 minutes flowed by.

It was a meaningful 10 minutes.

“In any case, we have to know the fact that we’re screwed.”

Barbatos spoke while massaging her left cheek with some ice.

“That’s all I wanted to say. That we’re screwed. That old and bald-headed Marbas may be mad, but he’s firmly upset right now.”

“That is your problem, Barbatos. The fact that you talk needlessly crudely.”

Paimon wrapped a bandage around her right shin.

“Truly. Do you know how inefficient you are when speaking to people? Every time you utter a word, it becomes a waste of time.”

“Like how you waste your life every time you utter a word, bitch?”

“See? Again with your crude manner of speaking……. When this lady was going out with you in the past, this lady believed that it was because you were still young, that your way of speech had become aggressive because you had gone through a lot of perilous experiences at a young age. Thus, this lady thought that, with great magnanimity, she should be understanding of your behavior. However, seeing as there was no change despite 500 years having passed, it was not your experiences that were the problem, but simply your personality itself that was the issue. Your tongue is unnecessarily promiscuous.”

“Heeh. Like how your crotch is unnecessarily promiscuous?”

Paimon slapped Barbatos’ right cheek. Barbatos kicked Paimon’s left shin. Paimon slapped Barbatos once more. Barbatos kicked Paimon once more. Time was then eternal.

15 minutes flowed by.

It was a beautiful 15 minutes.

“Old man Marbas sent a letter a short while ago.”

Barbatos spoke while rubbing her right cheek with some ice.

“Should I even call it a letter? Plain and simple, it’s an ultimatum.”

“Marbas has always been a bit hard-headed.”

Paimon wrapped a bandage around her left shin.

“Although the things which he thinks are allowed do not always have to be allowed, the things which he has determined to be not allowed are unallowed no matter what. In good terms, he is a principlist.”

“In better terms, he’s a damn aggressive old fossil.”

Paimon nodded.

“And he is a bald old man.”

Barbatos nodded.

“And he’s a bald old man.”

Was that last comment absolutely necessary?

While internally giving all of the bald people in the world my deepest sympathy, I spoke.

“What was written in the ultimatum?”

“Seeing is believing.”

After unnecessarily uttering that line in a cool fashion, Barbatos tossed me the piece of parchment that was rolled up into a scroll. On the piece of parchment, a rage-filled handwriting was grandly strewn about it.

.....I have set up camp in the fields and mountains a fair distance away from the battlefield. When you two had sent me to these fields and mountains, we had discussed a stratagem to strike at the enemy supply lines in order to create breathing room for our kind. However, looking at things now, you two had cast me away in order to strangle our kind.

The military order I was given was to smite the enemies. Now that you two have killed our comrades, I shall ask the two of you who my enemies are.

You two, who had unbecomingly argued when discussing the subject of conquering the human armies, became harmonized when slaughtering our own troops. Did you two start this war in order to behead our own kind? I ask you two this, is it the territory of the humans which you two desire or is it the territory of the demons?

Saying that my faction has the most cavalry, you two are the ones who had assigned my troops as the detached force. I now intend to gather this large number of cavalry units together and direct them towards the two of you. Do I have a reason why I should not do so?

Striking you two from behind and straightening the laws of the demon continent is an easy task. However, as we have fought together on the same battlefields for the past several hundred years, I have sent you two this final letter in order to tell you.

Be ashamed of yourselves. Wear the clothes of criminals and crawl your way to these fields and mountains and await your judgment. Answer everything which I have asked. If you two await your judgment and answer my questions, then I shall decide whether to behead you two or not.....

“I see. I understand now.”

I nodded.

“So this is why Your Excellency had mentioned the saying ‘know thyself’.”

“This is why you said that when you’re screwed, you have to realize the fact that you’re screwed.”

“Since we have grasped the situation, let us immediately discuss countermeasures. How does Your Excellency plan to resolve this? I recall that before carrying out the purge, Your Excellency had said that you would handle His Excellency Marbas.”

“Even if you believe that things will work out, not everything will be resolved—.”

“Although I do want to continue listening to Your Excellency impersonate the voice of some middle-aged old man since it is interesting, the situation is a bit too dire for it to be ignored by simply saying a proverb.”

“Fuck.”

Barbatos stuck out her lips and nodded.

“I don’t understand. How did he hear about the purge already? According to my calculations, no matter how fast the news got to him, we should have still had another quarter of a day left before he found out. This means that someone had secretly sent him a letter and told him about it.”

“A secret letter, huh…….”

For an instant, Demon Lord Sitri came to mind. The only reason for this was because I had clashed with her only a short while ago before coming here.

It was just after midnight.

Barbatos and Paimon were seated in chairs that were prepared for them outside. Even now, the subordinates of the traitors were being dragged in front of us before then being executed. From time to time, when the executioners turned to glance at Barbatos and Paimon with a ‘Should we really kill them’ look on their faces, the two Demon Lords would nod lightly. Barbatos and Paimon had nodded their heads several times already since a short while ago, and each time they did, the heads of the subordinates would be sent flying.

One of the subordinates had a frantic look on his face as he stretched his arm out towards us.

“Y-Your Highness! O Greater Being! This one, this one had met Your Highness when he was little! In Niflheim! When Your Highness was carrying out a triumphal celebration——.”

“Yeah, a confidential letter. If one of us didn’t hand over the information beforehand, then there’s no way that old man Marbas could have reacted this soon.”

Barbatos nodded.

There was a death throe and then there was the sound of something falling and rolling on the ground.

I stroked my chin.

“Does Your Excellency have an assumption on who it was?”

“I have nooooo idea. In the first place, didn’t we do this purge in order to get rid of those types of bastards? How is it that the instant we wipe them out, there’s already another bastard present to sell us out? Is it perhaps that? Do the other Demon Lords have a hobby of selling people out whenever they’re bored? Is betraying your comrades trending right now?”

“Comrades refers to enemies who have yet to betray you.”

“Ah. That sounds somewhat like an actual proverb. It’s a bit fucked

though.”

Haaa, Barbatos let out a sigh.

“Forget it, fuck. Let’s just forget everything. Those human bastards are swarming at the front and those traitors to our kind are flocking at the rear. Furthermore, among those who you think are your comrades-in-arms, there are insects who hastily write secret messages. Makes me wonder why I’m making myself go through this much hardship by going to war…….”

“This lady had told you so back when we were going out. That you should not behave impetuously with everything. You must broaden your mind a bit, Barbatos. The problem is that your mind is unnecessarily stiff.”

“And your problem is that your crotch is unnecessarily loose. Your crotch is so broad that even if all of heaven and earth went in there, it feels like there’d still be enough space for the universe. The foul stench which flows throughout the world every time you spread your legs can probably make those already dead corpses come back to life before twisting their limbs and dying once more.”

“Aha.”

Paimon smiled.

“In other words, you mean those corpses that had died because of the convulsions which had occurred due to having intercourse with your incredibly stiff crotch? This lady heard that the numbers reach approximately seven thousand. They say that the God Hades sends his regards to your crotch annually in order to show his respect, but have you considered visiting the underworld in order to express your gratitude to him? Right this instant, if you must.”

“This whore?”

“What are you going to do about it, you barren girl?”

“Why is it that there’s never a time where our opinions match? Since our opinions are the complete opposite no matter what the topic is, whenever we talk, it feels as if there’s a demon continent inside of us that’s split in half.”

“This lady has to reveal that she too feels the same way. That is why it feels as if the demon continent could live in unity if you were to disappear. However, this lady does not wish to go out of her way to dirty her hands so it would be wonderful if you went to some location unseeable to this lady and died on your own.”

“What’s worse is that our opinions differ even here. I want to just kill you with my own two hands after all. Even if you commit suicide, I’ll be happy if you do so after getting hit by me a bit first, and if you commit suicide before I can even hit you, then I’ll feel so cheated that I’ll just hit your corpse.”

“Boor.”

“Hypocrite.”

“Murderer.”

“Sex maniac.”

“Most rotten thing in the world.”

“And you’re the biggest bitch in the world.”

“Y-Your Hiiiiiiighnessss!”

And then another obscure nobody shouted.

“This humble servant has an old mother and a young daughter waiting for him back home, so this servant cannot possibly die yet. Please show mercy and——.”

“Do you truly wish to live like that? Barbatos?”

Paimon nodded.

There was a death throe, and then there was the sound of something rolling.

A marvelous staccato.

“Can you not live a life that is a bit better? This lady is referring to a more beautiful life. An elegant way of speaking. If you do so, then even your irremediable personality will become slightly beautiful.”

“I wonder. I’m not sure if I’m living like this because I want to live like this, but the fact that I don’t want to live like you, bitch, is clear. Rather than how I want to live my life, not wanting to live like someone else is the staple of leading my life. Especially when I look at you, the thought ‘let’s not live like this bitch’ is so strong that, in that regard, you’re the bitch who’s continuously extending my life and, in that regard only, are you a bitch that’s of any use.”

“The fact that your life is like trash is not surprising at all.”

“Yoour Hiiiiighnessss!”

Barbatos and Paimon nodded at the same time.

“So how should we deal with this?”

“So how should we respond to this?”

There was a death throe, and then the obvious sound of something rolling followed after.

A beautiful harmony.

“Marbas has military insight. He is experienced. If he becomes our enemy, then it would become troublesome for us in no small measure. Normally, we would resolve the situation through dialogue ———.”

“He’s firmly pissed off right now. More than anything else, we don’t have a lot of time. The news about our purge will soon hit the entire

region of the demon continent hard and the Demon Lords in the back will hastily try to gather troops. We have to cross the Black Mountains as fast as possible and return home before that can happen.”

Paimon nodded.

“We do not have enough time to persuade him.”

“And we don’t have the leisure to fight and win against him even more.”

“Although there is the possibility that he will forgive us if this lady and Barbatos were to wear white mourning garments and prostrate ourselves before him——.”

Barbatos nodded.

“We can’t. If we do that, then that would end up meaning that our purge was wrong. Why are we apologizing? Didn’t we just kill traitors? People who doubt us will start to appear and we’ll lose our justification. I don’t like that. We have to lead our punitive expedition through the demon continent with a fight of justifications anyway, but we’ll be at a disadvantage if we apologize.”

“Dantalian.”

“How are we going to deal with this problem?”

The two Demon Lords then gazed at me.

Me, the very person who had set this purge in motion.

“Of course, I’m not telling you to give us a solution right this instant.”

“However, we are pressed for time.”

If by a very slim chance the purge were to end in a failure, me, the one who would receive a blow more severe than anyone else.

With cold eyes.

“Midnight has passed. I’ll give you until **midday today**.”

“At the least, we will also have to devise a countermeasure before Marbas takes action, after all.”

“Until then, we’ll be handling the after-measures of the purge.”

“This lady apologizes. The time limit is excessively pressing.”

One of them was my sex partner,
and the other was my political partner.

The two were also figures of authority who both could purge 7 Demon Lords without any hesitation whatsoever at the same time.

As they were figures of authority that could blame someone without any hesitation if they had to blame someone, they could be cold when they had to be cold, and they were well aware of when to set themselves ablaze if they had to be hot. In other words, the lords of all of demonkind were obliquely staring at me.

“No matter how smart you are, I’m aware that this is a difficult request. But.”

“We must ask this of you, Dantalian. All of our fates are on the line.”

Therefore.

“.....”

Tap.

I pressed my thumb against my chin as if I were patting it.

———Slowly.

The scenery of the night flowed smoothly.

As if time had forgotten about its own speed.

Soldiers roamed around the encampment while holding torches. The military camp was illuminated by the torches located here and there, making it seem like summer fireflies were randomly flying about. Below each light, the subordinates of traitors had been caught and were being dragged. They were either dragged off and killed or dragged here and killed. A single group of soldiers snickered. A dark night. The snickering easily spread from the shadows. The underlings howled until their heads were severed, and in an instant, a death throe would resonate before coming to an abrupt halt.

Who is it?

Who is trying to bite me right now?

The purge had proceeded with extreme secrecy. If you did not have a high-ranking post like a Demon Lord, then you could not have found out about it. The traitors were all punished without exception, and yet, a letter had still reached Marbas. Although there were no traitors, there was a betrayal. Who was it? How?

Marbas had gathered his dispatched force and traveled a long distance away. Since he was constantly on the move, it was difficult to pinpoint his exact location. Despite that, the letter had properly gone straight to Marbas and——Marbas immediately believed the report of treason that was written in the letter. Why? Who was it?

How could he have trusted the report which stated that his comrades-in-arms of 500 years, Barbatos and Paimon, had caused a disaster without doubting the report even slightly? Is there someone he trusts more than Barabtos and Paimon? If there is, then who exactly is it? Who could possibly receive that much trust?

The last thing a person can trust the most is money.

“.....”

Tap.

I tapped my chin with my index finger.

Within the sensation and velocity of touching my skin, time became slower. I hastened my thought process.

Money. Military funds.

In the end, Barbatos, Paimon, and Marbas occupied the top government positions in their provinces. The financiers of the armies. Even this expedition of leading our troops for barely half a year had wasted a tremendous amount of supplies. However, these leaders had repeated expedition after expedition for more than 400 years. They should all be well aware of how important military funds are down to their cores.

You cannot win a war with tired soldiers, more so with hungry soldiers.

Thus there were a lot of firms throughout the demon continent. Groups of merchants that took full charge of the provisions and supplied them. Firms that loaned money to those who were lacking in military funds. There was a firm that was in charge of each respective Demon Lord, and in my case, it was the Keuncuska Firm. In the first place, the reason why Lapis Lazuli and I had met was due to that.

To merchants, war is an opportunity to make money.

“.....”

Tap.

I tapped my chin with my middle finger.

I searched through my memories. There was no doubt. There was a time and place where I had heard this. The information regarding which firm and merchant were in charge of Marbas. It was not because I had a particular interest in Marbas. It was a survival instinct. The firm and the merchant were coincidentally both quite important to me at that moment, and they were also in charge of ‘the person who was once severely hostile towards me’. Impressively, my survival instincts were forcing me to remember——.

“.....”

I then looked at the Demon Lord before me.

Paimon.

Rank 9th Demon Lord.

The woman who had accused me of the matter regarding the Black Death.

Once I looked at her, Paimon opened her mouth.

With a voice that sound three or four times slower than usual.

“.....—.....? Dan-tal-i-an?”

Paimon tilted her head ever so slowly.

I then remembered.

— Your Highness.

It was around the time I had met Lapis for the first time.

— If Your Highness does not repay the debt and interest or declare bankruptcy, then the Keuncuska Firm will have no other choice but to take Your Highness' property and body by force.

The me at that time was in a completely different situation compared to now. I had no money. My life was hard-pressed. The urgency of my life had brought upon the criticality of time. I had to escape from my debt as soon as possible. In order to survive, I had hunted the game that was the easiest to tear apart.

— The Keuncuska Firm has a countless number of supporters. Amongst them, there are other Demon Lords like Your Highness.

— Rank 5th Demon Lord Marbas.

— And Rank 9th Demon Lord Paimon are also included.

A dark night.

Soldiers were going back and forth throughout the camp while holding torches. Similar to how the light was lengthily connected from torchlight to torchlight, my thought process was connected from point to point.

Underlings let out their final cries of agony. Decapitated heads fell endlessly. Lapis Lazuli's voice flowed between the endless screams and boundless cries.

— Our firm is famous for being merciless to debtors who fail to make their payments.

— In the past, there was an incident where Rank Demon Lord Glasyalabolas received a loan ofLibra and did not pay back the interest for

Screams. Cries. Noise.

But not yet.

Similar to a steel sword that had rusted due to the passage of time, my memories were scratched in various places. Since a long time ago, I have always been weak at memorizing numbers and doing calculations. Those parts of my memories were always the first to be worn down.

However, as a steel sword was still a steel sword even when rusted, it was sharp enough to kill a person and save my own life.

Think.

Remember it.

There are still words left for Lapis, for my memories, to tell me. What was said? What did Lapis tell me?

It was a dark night. Because Lapis was standing in a place that could not be seen, the sensation of her opening her mouth and whispering silently flooded over me. Within the space where torchlights and torchlights connected and swayed, I solely connected

the light within the light.

— Your Highness.

— At that time, our firm had hired a small number of 9,000 mercenaries.

— And left them in the command of Rank 12th Demon Lord Sitri.

— Glasyalabolas could not even hold out for before surrendering.

Tap.

I tapped my chin with my ring finger.

The wind blew. The torches flared up.

As they flared, the light created a long line.

Who wishes for the war to not end? Merchants.

Who is trying to interfere with the war right now? Marbas.

Which firm is in charge of Marbas? The Keuncuska Firm.

All right.

If that is the case, then who rules over the Keuncuska Firm?

I asked myself this.

I immediately answered.

Ivar Lodbrok.

An ancient vampire who has lived for several hundred years,

and the merchant who held the most hostility towards me before anyone else.

Oho. Oh dear. Would you look at this?

I quietly gazed at the band of light that was surging in our military encampment. Barbatos and Paimon, while slowly drawing their brows together, no, they were still endlessly drawing their brows together slowly, stared at me as I did that.

As I thought, Barbatos, Paimon, you two are clever. However, I shall offer you two my deepest condolences. The two of you have wound up misunderstanding something at a decisive area.

It was not a Demon Lord who had sent Marbas that letter. Ivar Lodbrok. It was the vampire who was in charge of Marbas and also did not desire for the war to end who had sent it.

I cannot blame these two Demon Lords for this misconception. Barbatos and Paimon had sincerely kept the matter regarding the purge under strict confidentiality. Only their close aides knew about it. If the information was leaked, then it was undoubtedly another Demon Lord who had done it, these two had jumped to this conclusion as if it were an obvious fact. This was their mistake.

Even if the only people who knew about the purge beforehand were the other Demon Lords——there is no reason whatsoever that the person to have sent the letter to Marbas had to have been the Demon Lord himself.

Instead of personally informing Marbas about the secret, all the information leaker has to do is lightly toss the information to the merchant who Marbas trusts. Because.

The enemy of my enemy is my ally.

That's right.

Rank 12th Demon Lord Sitri.

Paimon's close aide. The person who had learned about the purge faster than anyone else.

Most importantly, the enemy who is hostile towards me and is trying to bring me down.

— Your Highness.

— At that time, our firm had hired a small number of 9,000 mercenaries.

— And left them in the command of Rank 12th Demon Lord Sitri.

I do not know exactly when, but it was definitely since a very long time ago.

A relation that was close enough for the Keuncuska Firm to hire an army and leave them in that person's command. A rare relationship that was so close that the person would strike other Demon Lords for the Keuncuska Firm and make those Demon Lords cough up money.

Since a very long time ago——the Keuncuska Firm and Demon Lord Sitri were 'accomplices' with a cozy relationship.

After Sitri had passed on the information regarding the purge to Ivar Lodbrok, Ivar Lodbrok had sent the letter to Marbas.

“.....”

Tap

It was at the moment my pinky had tapped my chin.

The world finally released an anxious sigh. The light returned to the light. The many sounds returned to the throes of death. Time had recovered its beating pace and flowed quickly.

As expected, Barbatos and Paimon stopped slowly drawing their brows together and spoke to me.

“Dantalian? What’s up with you all of a sudden?”

“Are you perhaps unable to hear this lady’s words?”

No.

I hear you loud and clear. So clear that I cannot hear you any better than this.

I raised the corners of my lips and smiled.

“Your Excellency ordered this one to take care of this matter before midday, correct? It is all right. Do not worry. I have a rough grasp on how things have proceeded after all.”

Both Barbatos and Paimon tilted their heads in the opposite direction from each other.

“What?”

“Pardon?”

As expected of the two women who were each other’s first love, their thought processing speed was also similar. Even the angles which they had tilted their heads in were alike. In short, they were the exact same degree of slowness.

Albeit, despite this fact, their thought processing speed was on the fast side. Is this not regrettable? The original speed is bound to be relative.

I spoke once more while matching their pace.

“Your Excellency Barbatos. Your Highness Paimon. This one has a general grasp of the situation. There is no need to wait until midday today. I shall take care of it within an hour, so please handle the preparations to withdraw with haste.”

“.....Whaat? No, wait. Wait a second.What? You grasped the situation? What are you talking about? Don’t tell me, are you saying that you figured out who it was that leaked the information?”

I knit my brows slightly.

“That is the case, Your Excellency. I have said that with that exact meaning in mind. What other meaning could it possibly have? Have I ever ridiculed Your Highness with nonsense before?”

Barbatos shut her mouth.

Paimon spoke up from beside her.

“.....How exactly? We have yet to carry out any sort of investigation. There are over 10 Demon Lords who could have possibly leaked the information. How could you have figured out who it was without having interrogated anyone?”

“My apologies, Your Highness Paimon, but investigations are actions that are carried out when one lacks information. Although this one may not know a lot of things, this one at least knows enough to figure out what must be known.”

“.....”

There was a moment of silence.

I let out a sigh.

“All right. When this one was born, this one was born possessing reasonable intellect. This one can easily figure out things which Your

Excellency and Your Highness still do not know. As this is simply a fact, please accept it as so. For what reason is it that this one, who is at the tail end of ranks among Demon Lords, is able to have a private audience with lords and monarchs such as Your Excellency and Your Highness? Is it not because my noggin was appraised highly? It is nothing new. Please accept the fact that my brain has more creases than Your Excellency and Your Highness' and let us first discuss countermeasures."

".....That's right. I completely forgot because I shoved you in a cell for the past week. Dantalian, although you're reasonably good at sex and have a reasonably good-looking face, more than anything else, you're a fucking annoying bastard."

Barbatos sighed heavily.

"The Heavens are quite disturbingly fair. Even though they gave this bastard a good head and tongue, they forgot to package him with the most important thing, a good personality. Hey, you black lamb, if you were a bit more modest, then we would probably have had sex a hundred more times every time we did it."

No.

I don't need that kind of bonus. Seriously.

The 'play' which you forced me to do was so extreme that I honestly got freaked out every time we did it. Master or whatever. Telling me to treat you like a slave or whatever. It felt like she had a few loose screws in her head. I apologize, but even someone like me, who has both common sense and refinement, finds this to be difficult to endure.

".....So who is the culprit?"

It seems Paimon had regained her composure as she covered her mouth with her fan.

"No, rather than that, what did you mean when you told us to

handle the preparations to withdraw with haste? Please explain it to us in a more calm and orderly manner.”

“I apologize, but I cannot tell Your Excellency or Your Highness about the culprit yet. Just know that this one promises to handle this issue perfectly.”

“Ah. Again. Look at this bastard roll his tongue again. Fuck, it wasn’t just once or twice that that had gotten the best of me.”

Barbatos scowled.

“How do you plan to deal with it? Are you telling us to simply believe in you with no questions asked? And what do you mean by withdrawing already? Do you not see us still dealing with those remaining pieces of garbage over there? Just those guys alone number in the thousands. The thousands. It’ll take the entire day just to wipe them all out.”

“That is what I wished to talk about, Your Excellency.”

I grinned.

“Do we really have to go out of our way to clumsily kill them all?”

“.....?”

“Your Excellency and Your Highness. Please allow me to borrow your ears for a moment.”

Barbatos and Paimon looked straight at each other’s face.

They then, as I had expected, leaned their ears towards me at the same angle and speed.

I smiled benignly as if I were presenting enlightenment to a couple of people who were lost in a cloud of thick dust.

Shortly after.

“———Crazy bastard. Insane bastard. Fucking bastard. No, seriously, when did you make something like that? You’re crazy, right? You’re insane, right? Fuck. How could you do that without my permission?!”

“.....”

Barbatos struck my cheek as if she intended to chew me alive right this instant. Paimon was simply gazing at me with a ‘wooooow…… wow, wooooow……’ expression on her face. Even though the directional nature of the two was the complete opposite, what they actually wanted to express was the same.

The fact that I was a crazy bastard.

“No! Absolutely not! Are you insane, you son of a bitch? Do you think I’d just sit here and allow that?! Get rid of it right this instant. No, hand it over. Hand it over to me!”

“Dantalian, this lady also believes that that is a bit too much……. No, of course, this is a fact that this lady was already aware of, but for your information, the only ones in the world who know of this fact are you, Dantalian, and this lady……. Barbatos had killed the rest.”

“And I’m going to kill you now!”

Barbatos grabbed me by the collar and shook me intensely.

Mm.

A man like myself was a man that had found that reconciling two Demon Lords who were once lifetime enemies was not enough and had the caring heart to even bring their personal opinions together in perfect harmony, but before I could be in awe with my own greatness, mm. I felt nauseous. I felt like I’d really throw up if she continued to shake me any more than this. My gastric fluid was shouting that they wanted to see the outside world as well.

I spoke calmly.

“Nevertheless, even if you say that. The method which this one had informed Your Excellency and Your Highness about is the most effective.”

“.....”

Barbatos froze in place.

Thanks to that, my urge to vomit was able to subside. I displayed a fresh smile. Every time I smiled like this, Lapis Lazuli would advise me in a serious tone, ‘.....Your Highness, since that smile easily calls upon one’s desire to commit murder when witnessed, please refrain from doing so as much as possible’, but how could that possibly be the case? Since a long time ago, Lapis’ aesthetic sense was somewhat lacking in certain parts. When I smiled refreshingly, I knew how to actually smile refreshingly.

“Is that not so?”

“.....”

“Most importantly, there is no political burden whatsoever. What could people possibly say on the outside after having witnessed it? Could they even go around to places telling people about it? There are no losses and only a lot of merits. Even if Your Excellency requests me to suggest a stratagem that is more splendid than this, it would only trouble this one.....”

Barbatos frowned.

“.....Shut up. Damn it. Since you’re the one talking, this bullshit doesn’t sound like bullshit.”

“Of course, that is because this is not bullshit. Your Excellency, accepting the truth as the truth is also the virtue of a sovereign.”

“I told you to shut your damn mouth!”

Barbatos let go of my clothes and groaned. She had started to

contemplate while pulling at her hair, but it felt as if she was quite Bhuddistically exploring who I roughly was, where I had come from, and where I was going.

“.....”

Thinking.

“.....Uuuuuu.....”

Anguish.

“Fuck.....”

And resignation.

“Do what you want, you son of a bitch.....”

After magnificently accomplishing the three steps of Buddhism, Barbatos gave herself up in despair. Although, regrettably, it felt like she was unable to accomplish the actual last step which was enlightenment. It was fine. I did not severely rebuke the lack of virtue of all creatures. Despite my appearance, I am quite merciful.

I spoke with a mindset that accepted all of the unsightly things of the world.

“A most accurate decision, Your Excellency. This one is always in awe when hearing Your Excellency’s voice. Although Your Excellency occasionally makes very bad decisions such as when Your Excellency had threatened me and even thrown me in prison, that is no more than occasionally, so I can confidently say that Your Excellency makes the correct decision the majority of times.”

“.....Dantalian is, what should I say?”

Paimon muttered from behind her fan.

“His head is good, but he is slightly, or perhaps an incredibly unfortunate man.....”

This was quite the heated criticism.

“In any case, this one will take it as having received Your Excellency and Your Highness’ approval beforehand, so this one will be taking his leave…… Ah, right. Your Highness Paimon.”

As I was lowering my head and about to depart, there was something that I had suddenly remembered, so I whispered to Paimon. As Barbatos was still asking herself what the root of her existence was, she did not show any concern to us.

“Was it perhaps Your Highness who had spread those booklets throughout the military headquarters of the Crusaders?”

“Pardon?”

Paimon tilted her head prettily.

“Booklets…… is it?”

“Yes. Books that have gray covers. They are incredibly thin.”

“Mm? This lady does not know. This lady is not sure of such things.”

Paimon hid the sides of her mouth with her fan and knit her brows. Her expression appeared as if she were trying to think of something, but was unable to recall anything at all.

“What exactly are those booklets supposed to be that you are asking this lady about them, Dantalian?”

“Please do not be surprised. I heard that the humans in the army of the Crusaders had written down my speech on their own initiative and are reading it as they pass it around. That is the booklet which I had mentioned.”

“Oh dear, is that true? It has been a long time since this lady has heard such good news.”

Paimon was visibly delighted.

“As expected, people will understand if spoken to. If they do not understand even if they are told, then the majority of the time, it is because their education is incomplete. Their lack of education is due to the unworthiness of the monarch so the subjects cannot be held responsible. When one’s subject does not understand, it is only appropriate for the monarch to lament instead of rage. In that regard, the fact that the humans are passing the booklets around on their own volition…… that is truly, truly a joyous event.”

Paimon spoke with a complexion that was dyed with elation.

“Is there something which this lady could help with?”

Surely.

Is that how it is.

I courteously held my smile in my mouth.

“Is the sight of the people trying to stand up on their own not beautiful? Would it also not be beautiful to silently watch over the people trying to stand up on their own? If they are no longer able to endure and end up reaching their hands out, it would not be too late to take hold of their hands at that time.”

“Fufu.”

Paimon muffled her laugh. Beyond her fan, her voice was dyed in endless joy. It was a smile that was gentle because it was beautiful.

“Indeed, that is right as well. Your words are correct, Dantalian. This lady will hope that the lovely scenery will be prolonged for as long as possible.”

Perhaps, Sitri was moving behind the scenes solely for this smile.

Right when we were about to say our goodbyes while smiling at

one another, Barbatos glared at us with murderous eyes like a chihuahua that had starved for roughly two days.

“Hey. Do you not see me suffering here? What are you two so warmly whispering about?”

We both turned to look at Barbatos.

“Nothing, you washboard child.”

“Nothing, O Lord who has realized the virtue of destitution.”

Barbatos lamented.

“Damn bastards…….”

I’m saying it again, but this was quite the heated criticism.

□ **King's Mistress, Mixed Blood, Lapis Lazuli**
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 11
Polles, Bruno Plains, Army of the Crescent Alliance

“.....Has His Highness Dantalian not arrived yet? Why has he yet to come despite having called for me?”

“His Highness will be back soon.”

I spoke smoothly.

“Please wait calmly, Chief.”

“Do you know how many times I have heard that line now? After a while, in a short bit, soon..... tsk.”

We were in a tent that was shrouded in the night.

The Chief of the Keuncuska Firm, Ivar Lodbrok, clicked his tongue. He has been tapping his cane against the floor since a while ago. It is rather unpleasant.

“Chief, this one had requested you to wait.”

“......”

“If it is difficult for you to wait, then this one will separately notify you when His Highness has returned. Do you wish for this one to see you out?”

Chief Lodbrok glared fiercely in my direction. Did my words hit a nerve, I wonder. That is surprising. I was simply being considerate towards the old and infirm merchant.

“This youngster who is still wet behind the ears..... For someone who is simply the child of a common whore, with what courage are

you babbling so proudly?”

“This one sees that you possess a marvelous talent, Chief. Yes. My biological mother was indeed a harlot. It has not been that long since this one had discovered this truth either. How did you find out, Chief?”

“Do you think that I would not have attached even a single spy on you? I am also aware that you were the one who had personally taken the head of your own mother. How interesting. Your behavior of imprecating others is a glory that you are able to bask in solely due to Demon Lord Dantalian.”

“.....”

“Do you not look forward to seeing if that glory of yours is simply a brief moment behind the scenes?”

That is so.

A foul stench is destined to emanate from things that have stagnated.

This is one of the horribly rotten truths of the world.

“Your words are harsh, Chief. Please be more mindful.”

“Ha.

The day when Dantalian’s age of prosperity comes to an end will also be the day when your descent down to Hell begins. What would happen if the world were to find out that you had murdered your own biological mother? Since he has made such a boorish woman into his lover, His Highness Dantalian’s reputation will most likely plummet as well. Are you aware? There is not a single man in the world who would like a woman that could make them fall from grace.”

“.....”

The Keuncuska was the leading firm of the demon continent.

As people would say, they were a group that was referred to as the Great Keuncuska.

Even now, the firm was carrying out the role of warehouse keeper and was providing supplies for the Crescent Alliance. Adding to that, Lodbrok was a big merchant who was in charge of both Demon Lord Marbas and Demon Lord Paimon. If you were not one of the higher ranking Demon Lords, then you would most likely be incapable of even standing against this vampire who was sitting in front of me.

“When that time comes, I shall observe how violently an outcast like you will behave against the world.”

I let out a sigh.

———I see that he is hardly worth my time.

My sigh must have irritated him as the chief drew his brows together.

“Who do you think you are to be sighing before me?”

“You should also be well aware since you said that you had placed spies on this one. Although it may be more than this one deserves, this one receives deep affection from His Highness Dantalian. This one will not deliberately point out the issue regarding the fact that you are speaking informally to the mistress who may or may not be capable of exerting her influence to His Highness.”

“Oho. That is quite the high horse you are on there. What are you trying to say?”

“In the end, this one will not make His Highness Dantalian fall.”

The chief snorted after hearing my words.

“And here I was, curious as to what it was that you wanted to say.

What a foolish child. Is that something that will not happen simply because you wish for it to not happen? The mere act of spreading the news of your lowly and immoral crime would be enough to immediately drop the reputation of.....”

“I apologize for cutting you off in the middle of your sentence, Chief, but how exactly could that possibly make His Highness fall?”

“What?”

The chief knitted his brow. Was he unable to understand? Or is he feigning ignorance despite having understood?

Regardless of which side it was, there should be no problem with playing along with the scrawny disposition of an elderly man. He is a precious guest. I am a person who welcomes precious guests with my utmost devotion.

“His Highness is not an individual who cares about his reputation to the world. To be more precise, as His Highness is a person who exercises caution towards the increase of his own reputation, His Highness is an individual who will instead try to lower his own reputation by any means possible. By doing so, he is able to bewitch the many beasts that live in blindness.”

“.....”

“His Highness had risen to the ranks of millionaires within the shortest amount of time in history. His Highness was the fastest person to have ever broken through the Black and White Fortresses. When Demon Lord Marbas was defeated and Demon Lord Barbatos’ forces were in danger of being breached, it was also His Highness who had obtained the achievement of rescuing the Crescent Alliance. Despite these facts, how are things like, Chief?”

I was simply speaking in a voice that was neither high or low.

“Despite these achievements, are the sounds of praise towards His Highness resonating throughout the demon continent?”

That was not the case.

His Highness' fame was not even remotely high. Demon Lord Dantalian, who was ranked 71st, was so insignificant that he was a monarch whom the majority of the people living on the demon continent have never heard the name of. Although it felt as if his fame would begin to spread around the time the Black Death had started to spread, that was only for a moment. By making a half-breed such as myself into his fiancée and appointing a human girl as his acting general, His Highness' reputation had fallen to rock bottom

A lecher. A fool among fools.

That was the standpoint which the majority of demonkind had towards His Highness.

“His Highness' wealth is attributed under this one's accomplishment as his head handmaiden. The meritorious deeds of breaching through the Black and White Fortresses and rescuing the Crescent Alliance are set as services carried out by Lady De Farnese. Chief, do you consider all of these things to be a coincidence?”

“.....”

“You threatened to widely spread the news that this one had murdered her own mother, correct? That is fine. This one will not stop you. If anything, His Highness would most likely give you a round of applause and thank you, Chief. He will presumably say something along the lines of ‘You have done a good job doing this great one's task in his stead’.”

“.....”

“In the end, there is no way that this one could ever make His Highness fall. Because His Highness has always desired to reside in the low shadows. His Highness is an individual who prefers to dwell in the shadows whenever the noon sun is shining in the sky. This one is graciously one of those shadows for His Highness.”

Acting General, a human child.

Captain of the Royal Guards, an immensely lowly witch.

Head Handmaiden, a half-breed succubus.

As vassals, we serve His Highness for life. His Highness is a fire that will burn the world. If the fire is going to burn and shine its light as far out as possible, then, more important than anything else, a night, a dark night was undoubtedly necessary. An illegitimate child, a slaughterer, and an outcast, we are His Highness' dire night.

“The likes of us are nothing but humble beings, but we attend to His Highness with our humbleness. As we know that this is our duty as his vassals, we have no reason to change our despicableness.”

The vampire became silent.

The cane that kept tapping against the floor of the tent had stopped as well. Even the occasional noise of him clicking his tongue had ceased. This is a good disposition. This most likely means that he has sufficiently understood my words. I nodded my head towards the chief one more time before turning around and resuming the task which I was taking care of.

Night.

A lot of things cannot be seen at night. You can only make assumptions of the places which you cannot see by using the sounds that can be heard, and in the distance, the creaking sound of wheels was echoing over the tents. Creak……. Grains of soil broke apart underneath the wheels and the sound of a person's voice overlapped it.

— Cheap services. Will throw away, dead beggars for you. Will throw away, dead corpses lying in the corner for you. Will pick up any kind of corpses. Cheap services. Will throw away, all dead

beggars…….

It was a homeless person wandering around the military encampment.

When the sun rises, these beggars gather together and gamble in a place where there is less sunlight, and when the sun sets, they search for tents with bright torches and stick out their bowls. Although the beggars who had lost even their bowls in gambling would stick out both of their hands, the beggars who had even lost their fingers in gambling would stick out their three or four fingers.

I can confidently assert that having less than three fingers on a single hand is not exactly pleasant news to a beggar. As that means they cannot retaliate properly if someone were to kick them, even if they could retaliate, it means that their efforts would be insignificant. Moreover, who would not wish to kick a beggar? From time to time, when the common soldiers kick at the beggars, the ones who have less than three fingers are assaulted without being able to do anything to defend themselves and this occasionally results in their deaths. The deaths of those beggars is natural and trivial. Similar to how normal people use their fingers to count numbers, beggars use their fingers to count the remainder of their lives.

One at a time.

One at a time.

And then it ends at one.

Corpses are thrown away in the corner of tents and left to rot. Flies gather around those rotting corpses. The annoyed soldiers kick the corpses further into the corner, but the corpses simply continue to pile up in every corner. This provides another type of livelihood for the beggars.

Sturdy-shouldered beggars, whose fingers were still fine, roamed

around the military camp while pulling cheap-looking carts that came from only God knows where. On a cycle of every couple of days, they would roam around and collect the corpses in the corners. They then took the corpses far away in order to throw them out. Is this not brilliant? As someone who was originally a merchant, I rate these sorts of things highly. Until the day they gamble away their carts, they had managed to obtain a job for even the shortest amount of time by themselves.

Whenever the beggars pass by this tent while dragging their carts,

— I wonder if it's because that incredibly dreadful bitch lives here. Spit, there's a damn ton of dead chaps and bitches…….

they always say something as they do so.

Even their method of begging was highbrow in quite the number of ways.

I simply tossed two coins outside the entrance of the tent. There was no need for me to go out of my way to step outside. The wheels would then momentarily stop in the vicinity of this tent's entrance before letting out another 'creak' and departing.

Creak, creak.

Creak…….

“Why did you toss those coins to that person?”

A voice that sounded as if it were lost in thought.

Chief Lodbrok was glaring at me firmly.

“They would have taken care of those corpses even if you left them alone.”

“That would not be leaving them alone, but pushing them away. The people do not easily forget the ones who have pushed them away.”

I answered in a subdued tone.

“The ones who are not forgotten by the people can easily fall into ruin. If you can buy the apathy of the people with a couple of coins, then it is basically like having bought it for free. Although this one may be engaging in the business of a Demon Lord’s feudal government, there has yet to be a time where this one was unfaithful to the duty of a merchant.”

“Are you trying to buy the contempt of the people because you are a merchant? Is that an item which can be handled by merchants?”

“If it cannot be handled, then why would they be revering His Highness Dantalian?”

Silence.

The candlelight flickered and dimly lit the interior of the tent.

Many things cannot be seen at night. In the places that cannot be seen, there are beggars who die while begging and beggars who live by begging. When a fellow beggar dies, there are also beggars who beg by doing the job of picking up corpses and throwing them away. In the world, each place that cannot be seen is a corner, each out-of-the-way corner is a gap, and each gap is a wall. It is possible to escape from the corner of the world by climbing up that wall, but I do not blame them for simply hanging off the edge of the cliff and spending their days shaking.

It is simply an occupation and merely a physiology.

I do not blame them, but I use them instead. Beggars, harlots, and mercenaries, these were all things that lived while placing their occupation in a crevice. Similar to how a beggar uses the corpses of beggars on a daily basis in order to live, I continue my profession

while leaving the crevices of the world as crevices. The note that was being illuminated by the flickering candlelight was also a part of my job.

— Loud noises outside. Violently killed. The soldiers are going through the bordello. It is scary. A lot of fire is burning outside.

I wonder if they had written this in a hurry. The words on the memo that was sent by the spy were crooked. I checked the next letter.

— The soldiers suddenly shut up. It's quiet now.

— Sudden inspection. All of the girls who had hidden the books were taken away. I survived because my lover had told me about it beforehand. I'm saying this because I'm lacking money this half of the month, but please send more. Would that be okay?

— My sisters are being dragged away. They still haven't returned. I'm scared. I can't do this any longer. Please do not contact me anymore after the next payment. I'm sorry. I won't tell anyone.

These letters were all sent by harlots.

Whether to plant spies inside of the military tents or to plant spies in the vicinity of the military tents. Although these two options both have their own respective merits and demerits, I cannot help but prefer the latter. The lives that live while hanging off of a piece of rope that is dangling off the side of a cliff are the ones who will be the very first to realize when that rope begins to shake.

The only things which they can barely understand are signs and vague omens. The tasks of seizing the signals that are sent by them and interpreting their messages are solely my duty as His Highness' head handmaiden.

It is fine. I am a modest peasant.

A peasant knows best about the livelihoods of other peasants.

— Increase my pay starting the next half of the month. I'll snitch you out if you don't.

The life which will be forfeited after snitching will undoubtedly be your life and not my own. Since this was something the person directly involved knew best, there was no need for me to be concerned. Next.

— Are you the one who had spread these booklets as well? I want to go to that side. General Farnese is a human, right? I'm a human as well. It should be fine since a human is just going to another human, right?

Occasionally, there are harlots who get confused as to whether they are doing spy work or if they are philandering. If you comfort them with gentle words, then they will provide precious information later on. There is most likely no more need for this harlot to continue following the Crusaders around.

I implicitly replied that although you are a human, you will not be able to cross over to another human. Next.

— It's been crazy since earlier. I don't know what the fuss is, but it's noisy. Even the soldier that was pounding me had to stop mid-way because his superior called him. Stop mid-pounding. This is strange. Really strange.

— He still paid me properly. He was nice.

I see. It was indeed strange. Although there are occasions where soldiers stop in the middle of killing other people, there is never a time where they stop in the middle of having intercourse with a harlot.

As that was the case, if this truly did happen, then it was most likely because they were under pressure. The harlot who had sent this letter was not placed in the army of the Crusaders, but a girl who was situated in the dispatched troops of the Neutral Faction. Not only was her personality rather unusual, but her flaw was that she always sent two memos.

The speed of both the Imperial Princess of the Habsburg Empire and Corps Commander Marbas was not normal. They were targets of interest that required one to be apprehensive about in no small measure.

In our current situation, we lack the time to be able to leisurely appease the Neutral Faction. Before we can even persuade them, the Imperial Princess may rally her forces and attack us. If we do not persuade the Neutral Faction, then safely withdrawing to the demon continent would become impossible.

I see that this is a battle of speed. Will we be able to avoid the Neutral Faction and carry out our retreat first, or will the Imperial Princess lead the human armies to pursue us first.....? One day. Or perhaps two. This meager amount of time was going to determine the fate of the two armies.

Next

— Although there is nothing to send, it feels as if I am sending it. If there is something to send while sending something, then it feels as if I would. Ah, if this is life, then it is hollow.

This parasite flat out wrote a poem and sent it.

This is a girl with a somewhat strange head.

I sent a reply saying 'I apologize, but you do not possess poetic talent'.

Next.

— My older friend was caught and killed. It's because of you. It's all because of you.

— No. I did what you told me to do. All of it.

— Please, can you save my friends who are imprisoned? The older soldiers said that we have to provide bail. I just need this much.

Next.

Next.

Next.

Crows upon crows began to take flight. Each crow scattered throughout the night sky with a memo wrapped around their ankles.

At the latest, the harlots will receive the letters from the crows by tonight and read my reply while relying on a candlelight. The act of reading a letter which had been written in a place illuminated by a candlelight while also in a place that was lit up by a candlelight feels beautiful to me.

“What have you been continuing to send?”

A deeply thinking voice.

“Does it seem like those birds will come back with the things which you desire just because you had sent them?”

“This one simply wishes to feel out the world.”

“How foolish. Does the world feel as if it is being felt out simply because you claimed to be doing so? Lapis Lazuli. While one half is a harlot, your other half is a human girl. Even if a lowly girl like yourself were to feel out and spy on the world, it will all be in vain once the Demon Lord’s affection for you has faded. Do you believe in that Demon Lord? Or do you believe in people? Similar to how you are trying to feel out the world, will you also feel out the very bottom of people’s hearts?”

“Your worries are deep, Chief. Revealing your deep concerns is a dangerous thing to do as it will also reveal the deepest part of your mind as well, Chief. Are you trying to leave your heart with this one because you trust her? This one is the type of person who does not care even slightly about the hearts of others, and of course, your heart as well, Chief.”

“.....”

“Not only does this one not have a reason to do so, but this one does not try to pry into the foundations of other people either. This one is satisfied with simply the surfaces of people. Did you ask what His Highness’ foundation was, Chief? That is a silly question. As this one’s base is the same as His Highness’, there is no need for this one to be concerned.”

Silence.

I wonder how concentrated he was.

It was around the time the wax of a candle had melted down and formed a white, glazed pond. The sound of footsteps could be heard outside of the tent.

Step.

Seeing as how the guards are not trying to stop them, it seems another beggar has come to beg. The beggars who beg during the afternoon are the strongest and happiest, the beggars who beg during the evening are the second happiest, and the beggars who beg in the middle of the night while searching for a place that is bright are the most unfortunate. The disabled, who are among the lowest of beggars, are mostly like that.

As per usual, I picked up a coin and tossed it outside. The moment I was about to turn away since I was sure that the person would naturally leave, a voice seeped into the tent.

“Oh dear. I am finally observing the world after a week, but am I being told to take this pocket change and leave? I see that my love is cold-hearted.”

“.....”

It was the voice of His Highness Dantalian.

I took out a pocket watch and checked the time. It was past midnight. I heard that he was going to be discharged yesterday evening, but what has he been doing until now and where? The witches that were sent to fetch him had already returned with Farnese and were now sleeping in a corner of the tent.

“Has His Highness finally honored us with his presence? An individual who is quite difficult to see the esteemed face of. After having aged four generations and experiencing the eighth Crescent

Alliance, I am now having a bitter experience at last…….”

Chief Ivar Lodbrok, who was seated beside me, also stood up slowly. He was grumbling in a voice that was just low enough to not reach the outside of the tent.

I ignored him and straightened my clothes tidily.

“Welcome, Your Highness. Chief Lodbrok of the Keuncuska Firm had received Your Highness’ summon and is waiting for you inside.”

Lord Dantalian then arrived at the tent.



“Oho, Chief. I apologize for summoning you so late in the night.”

Lord Dantalian greeted the chief the moment he entered the tent.

“Regardless, I believed that it would not matter since you are a vampire, Chief, so I had sent that express messenger. I am worried that I may have possibly upset your mood.”

“Far from it. A greater being had summoned this one so why would it matter whether it was in the middle of the day or the middle of the night?”

“Yes. You are right. Only when you meet with someone when you have to meet with them would it then be called a meeting. So? Have you been doing well?”

His Highness pleasantly welcomed the chief with a smile, a smile which he had once told me was his charming smile, but in my personal opinion, it was a smile that looked unbelievably wicked.

I wonder if he believed that the atmosphere was not bad. Chief Lodbrok's expression naturally relaxed as well.

"Yes. This one should be the one to ask if Your Highness has been in good health. This one can only apologize for not being able to send his respects often."

"It is fine. Are you not the financier of our Crescent Alliance, Chief? I have also just returned from having an urgent discussion with Her Excellency Barbatos and Her Highness Paimon. I wish to discuss that topic with you as well, Chief."

"At once. If this one can be even the slightest of assistance to the greater beings, then this one would be honored."

"Take a seat first. Even if we shall be conversing, we should do so while seated."

It is night.

I can hear the sound of crickets through the sides of the tent. It seems that the crickets are letting out every last bit of reverberation in their bodies as if they absolutely had to tell someone right this instant that it was currently night. As I believe that bugs are all lives that hang off the side of a cliff and tremble, I do not think it is weird.

Although the night is a time that is easy for some people to fall asleep in.

For others, the night is a time that is easy for them to kill other people in.

"I shall cut to the chase. Ivar Lodbrok."

"Yes, Your Highness. Please tell this one anything."

Chief Lodbrok bowed his head while seated.

His Highness smoothly spoke towards the crown of the chief's head.

“How dare you betray the Crescent Alliance.”

“.....”

Silence.

In an instant, the air inside of the tent became paralyzed as if the tongue of a large snake had just passed by. Since it felt as if the shadow that was being illuminated by the candlelight was that of a snake, I held my breath. What did His Highness Dantalian say just now?

“Your Highness, just, what do you mean.....?”

I am most likely not the only person who thinks that they had misheard. Chief Lodbrok looked up at Lord Dantalian with a deathly pale face. Lord Dantalian still has a smooth grin on his face.

“What is the matter, Chief? Your complexion does not look good. Even if I did say those words in order to make your complexion rot, it is embarrassing if it rots so fast. More wrinkles will form on your already old face.”

It is those eyes.

The faint and partially opened eyes he would always display whenever he was looking for a prey to tear apart.

The same look which Lady Farnese, the girl who His Highness had taken in as his adopted daughter, had learned perfectly.

At times like this, His Highness would hum as if he were in an incredibly good mood.

“To be honest, I like you. You are open in both a good and a bad way. As you are able to conceal yourself well while in other places, at the very least, you cannot hide anything while you are before me. Oho, how profound. In a way, are we not already in a relationship that is somewhat similar to that of lovers?”

His Highness chuckled.

“I cherish you in a special way, Ivar Lodbrok.”

“.....”

His Highness' elongated shadow which was being illuminated in the tent was scoffing.

▯ **The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian**
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 11
Polles, Bruno Plains, Army of the Crescent Alliance

How long did the silence last, I wonder?

There was a color to people's emotions. There was also a fragrance. As it was the color of their voice, it was the fragrance of their heart. Ivar Lodbrok trembled with his entire body while his voice exuded his heart.

“.....This one's hope, this one's life aspiration, is to solely work for the Crescent Alliance. This one does not understand why Your Highness would reprimand this old soul. Please be more mindful, Your Highness.”

If you quibble over purely the time, then Ivar Lodbrok most likely panicked for no more than 1 minute. He was able to compose himself after the unexpected attack. To that extent, he was worthy of appraisal.

Regardless, it was unfortunate for him. My surprise attack had yet to even begin. Ivar Lodbrok, at most, all you had experienced just now was similar to having listened to the faint sound of horns starting to be blown on a battlefield.

I opened my mouth.

“Have you been secretly communicating with Demon Lord Sitri?”

“.....”

Flinch.

The vampire, who was trying to do whatever he could to continue

speaking, stopped moving. However, the only thing that had frozen in place was his visible movements. The color of his breath became hazier. The fragrance of his heart became thicker.

I stood up and approached Ivar Lodbrok. Then, as if I were appreciating a piece of art that consisted of color and scent, I slowly walked towards the chair that the vampire was seated in. As if I were putting a wooden fence around the vampire with the sound of my footsteps. As if I were creating a boundary and trying to trap him inside.

I enunciated with a voice that contained noble affection.

“Ivar Lodbrok. Starting from yesterday, I shall tell you what you had done before coming here today. Do listen carefully.”

“.....”

Press.

I raised my thumb and gently pressed down on the exact center of Lodbrok’s shoulders. His shoulder flesh, which was covered by his mantle, felt softer than it did firm, and it was crunchier than it was soft. To be exact, his shoulders possessed the same softness and crunchiness of an apple. If broken up well, then a thick-scented juice would most likely flow out.

“You were most likely bewildered when the purge began yesterday evening. Following after that, you moved around hastily because you did not know what exactly was going on. This is obvious. As the life of a merchant depends on how fast you can obtain information, there is no one out there who knows this better than you.”

“That is.....”

“But oh dear. There was a big problem. Who could you possibly go to in order to ask for the truth? Will you go to Her Excellency Barbatos and ask her? Darn.”

Press.

I raised my pinky on top the vampire's shoulders.

"No, you could not do that. Barbatos is a terrifying Demon Lord. She also has the tendency of valuing farmers more than merchants. Normally, you would laugh at this sort of person and call them outdated for being behind the times, but the situation changes when that outdated person has an executioner's blade in their hand. Naturally, your desire to laugh would go right back in. Aha, it is a problem. It is a problem."

".....Your Highness."

"Now what could you do? Even if you approached the low-ranking Demon Lords, they would most likely claim that they did not know what was happening, and in truth, they truly did not know. Oh dear, what could you do in this situation? Should you just run up to Her Highness Paimon and ask her? Darn."

Press.

Continuing from my thumb and pinky, I pressed my ring fingers down on his shoulders.

Similar to how a spider steps on its webs. Not too strong or too weak.

"No, you could not do this either. By all means, this was something which you surely could not do. With what face could you possibly request for a personal audience with Her Highness Paimon and ask her about the ulterior motives behind the purge? Her Highness had yet to even forgive you, this old vampire. If you were to infuriate Her Highness because of a slip of the tongue, then it would make matters into an even bigger issue."

"....."

"Aha, it is a problem. It is a problem. It cannot be helped. Barbatos

is a woman who would even keep a secret from her own close aides. Paimon is also a discreet Demon Lord. ‘However’, is what you must have then thought. Paimon may be a discreet woman, but is she not open to a single person, her close aide and pet, Sitri?”

“.....”

Press.

I added my middle fingers.

“You then contemplated. Were you not also longtime associates with Demon Lord Sitri? The two of you have a relationship where you would exchange miscellaneous requests with one another. Surely she would share this information with you.....”

I chuckled.

“Your prediction was on the mark. It was probably thanks to that long relationship of yours. Sitri provided you with the information about the purge as if she were paying back an obvious debt. Your brain must have then operated busily. Aah. Would things not become quite busy?”

“.....”

“A purge had ended up occurring. It was obvious that the demon continent was going to be thrown into a state of chaos in the near future. It was an important issue. Will you utilize this confusion and profit heavily off of it, or will you not? If you are going to do business, then how will you go about doing so? It was truly an important issue..... And, while you were in the middle of your thoughts, Demon Lord Sitri had spoken to you.”

In a tone that sounded as if she had just remembered something.

While putting her unique smile on top of it.

I tenuously attempted to speak in a falsetto. I was not particularly

used to this, but this was simply an extra effort in order to provide entertainment for the opposition. I could not refuse something like this. Let's see, would it not have been this sort of tone?

Oh right.

Now that I think about it, you also hate the Demon Lord known as Dantalian, right?

The vampire's complexion was ingrained in the breath he was letting out.

“Just, how…… no, what is Your Highness saying……?”

I saw this as a natural course of action. This person's trap was a maw that had drained a tremendous amount of blood from others throughout the passage of time. He was simply breathing out the fragrance which he had swallowed until now.

I was incapable of immediately seeing what sort of expression was on the vampire's face right now because I was standing behind the chair which he was seated in.

Not yet. I cannot appreciate this person's final expression yet. Fear had the same kind of charm as red wine. I had to wait patiently for the fragrance to flourish sufficiently.

“Indeed. Sitri has a pure charm by nature. She must have persuaded you like this.”

……No, it's not much. Ehehe. It's really a simple thing.

……Ei, really, Chief. You're going to be like this despite our relationship? Hmm? If anything, this is close to being something you

have to be the one to do, Chief. You have at least one method of urgently getting in contact with old man Marbas, right? Yeah?

“.....”

“You are the merchant who is in charge of His Excellency Marbas. Since that is the case, if an incident which needs to be hastily reported to His Excellency Marbas were to occur, then informing him of it would naturally be your duty.”

Like if a purge had occurred.

Like if a bunch of Demon Lords had died like a group of beggars.

Since it was an incident that was on the same level of a calamity.

.....Informing him of things like this, Chief.

.....Is this not your bounden duty?

These were not excessively incorrect words.

Because they were not excessively incorrect words, Ivar Lodbrok had done so.

There will be a great profit if the war lasts longer. That was it.

He did his duty as Marbas' exclusive merchant. That was it.

He was able to deepen his personal connection with Demon Lord Sitri. That was it.

———The price for thinking ‘that was it’.

Although someone may be pierced in the chest and die by an arrow that had been casually shot by someone else, the person who simply believes that all they did was casually shoot an arrow despite that, must receive an appropriate punishment and pay the price.

That was so. Punishment and price. I have always insulted the beasts that have tried to bite at my neck light-heartedly.

Even if that beast were the Rank 9th Demon Lord, it would not change.

Even if that beast were the Rank 5th Demon Lord, it would still not change.

Even if that beast were the vampire who controlled the greatest firm on the demon continent, it would still not change at all.

I spoke the name of the beast that had fearlessly walked straight towards me today.

“Ivar Lodbrok.”

Press.

I then finally added my index fingers on top of the beast's shoulders.

With my five fingers alone.

I divided my strength into five parts.

And pressed down on the bulky fruits that the vampire's shoulders were harboring.

The things which reverberated after being flattened by my fingers were most likely his blood vessels, and the things which groaned after being pushed down by my hands were most likely his bones. The thing which I had pressed deeply inside and pushed aside was the elderly greed which this person had held onto and lived with until

now. While grasping this person's blood vessels, bones, and elderly greed with my five nets, I spoke.

“Are you aware of what you had done?”

Know thyself.

After reciting this old saying, I slowly whispered into his ear.



“You are a filthy traitor who had dropped the entire Crescent Alliance into a bottomless pit.”

“.....”

I gently grabbed Ivar Lodbrok’s chin. He endured by hunching up with a strength that was unbecoming of his old bones. Although he was hunched up, he was doing so while trembling. I forcefully turned the vampire’s head.

A gaze that appeared as if he were looking at the Devil was there.

Aah. I grinned in satisfaction.

I released the old man’s chin. Like a person who had taken a single bite out of an appetizing dessert and spat it back out.

“——Huuk, haa…… haa…….”

I wonder if he had been holding his breath until this moment? Once Ivar Lodbrok was released from my grasp, he exhaled roughly. I lightly tapped his shoulder.

“You will lose your neck, Chief. Is one’s necks not important? You should look after your own better from now on.”

Stillness.

I could hear the soft sound of Farnese and the witches’ breathing as they slept in a corner of the tent. In this very moment, that was most likely the only sign of life that was flowing through the tent. The crickets outside had also stopped crying, so it was silent all around us.

“.....Proof.”

Ivar Lodbrok opened his mouth after a significant amount of time had passed.

“There is, no proof. This one is not in a position that is weak enough to be punished without proof.”

I laughed. Was this not nearly at the same level of a baby’s cute antics?

“What a surprising remark, Chief. It is an especially surprising remark for you to use as a method to defend yourself if you consider the current situation. Did the heads of seven Demon Lords not depart together on a group trip down the pathway to Hades just half a day ago? Her Excellency Barbatos and Her Highness Paimon had even sent them on that trip for free. No matter how I look at it, it seems that our honorable chief.”

I tapped the side of the vampire’s head.

“It seems that you are confident that your own single head is heavier than that of seven Demon Lords’, huh? I see that you calculate things with quite the amazing scale. Indeed, as one would expect from a big merchant, their scale is also incredibly special. Have your customers never complained to you that you should use proper weights?”

“.....”

“Yes. There is no evidence. But why would having evidence or not matter? Is this some formal court? Do you think that our two corps commanders would hold a special trial just for you, Chief? We are leading a purge, not a trial. Moreover, the reason why purges are purges is due to the fact that you are able to exterminate things simply because of your beliefs. Ah.”

I smiled slightly.

“Of course, the excuse that there is no evidence will last only momentarily. If we simply ask His Excellency Marbas whom he had

heard the information about the purge from, then would the proof not be brazenly made? Ivar Lodbrok. Vampire who has built a tower out of blood-stained gold coins. Your position has become quite pitiful.”

“.....This one has never sent a letter to His Highness Marbas. Your Highness can confirm this yourself. His Highness Marbas will also say that he does not know. Not only that. For Your Highness to say that this one had secret talks with Her Highness Sitri..... That is simply a forced deduction.”

Would you look at this?

Is this his desperate struggle in order to hang onto the rope until the very end?

However, it wasn't just the rotten rope. Even if my assumption were correct, just as the vampire had said, Marbas and Sitri would adamantly deny the charges. There was no evidence and there were no witnesses.

Although beheading people because of one's beliefs alone was what purges were, as expected, it was nothing more than a purge. If one were to try and swallow a large group like the Keuncuska Firm in a single bite, then your jaw would nearly crack.

Therefore, I decided to open the mouth more.

“All right. I shall accept your excuse. By the way, Chief. There is something this great one has been curious about for the past couple of days.”

“.....”

“I heard from a spy that the speech which my acting general had given was made into a small booklet and is running rampant inside the army of the Crusaders. The common soldiers have been passing the booklets around among themselves, so this occurrence in itself is not suspicious.”

I gave Lapis a glance.

Lapis understood the meaning behind my look and took out a single booklet from within a pile of documents before handing it to me. It was a booklet with a gray cover. The book where my and Farnese's speech was written down on. I received the booklet and tap, tap, I patted the vampire's shoulder.

"This happened too fast."

"....."

"It has only been a few days. Within those mere few days, it had been made into a booklet and circulated. As the hungry soldiers do not have the surplus strength to do something like that, the poor harlots lack the money to do so even more. As long as the one behind this does not move systematically, would it not be difficult to pull off?"

"Would the people not have made a united effort in order to make them? Since the cover is ragged and the pages are pitiable....."

"Still. It was much too fast."

Ivar Lodbrok closed his mouth. Did he intend to plead the Fifth here? If I were his lawyer, then that was an action which I would have heavily advised against in a moment like this.

"I shall acknowledge something, Chief. I have been pushing myself forward too much for a while. I had pushed myself forward incredibly too much despite being someone who did not know much. However, after piecing together the information, I was able to see an outline."

"....."

"If one wishes to circulate the books this fast, then there needs to be a hole in the Crusaders. A massive hole. A massive hole that will not disappear even if one were to capture some common soldiers and

procurers. Do you know what that is, Chief? If it were just a few days ago, then even I would not have been able to figure out what this was.”

The Republic of Batavia.

Not a country with a couple of spies planted here and there, but an entire country that was in the hands of a Demon Lord. Furthermore, not only was it the only republic in the human continent, but it was a land in the west that was secretly established by Demon Lord Paimon.

The words of the speech were copied down inside that country’s army, copies were printed, and they were then circulated. There was no need for them to hand the booklets out one by one either. All you had to do was simply dump a bunch of the booklets in some out-of-the-way corner of a tent. Similar to how the corpse of a beggar goes to another beggar, the discarded booklets would flow from the hand of one soldier to another.

Does this not naturally call upon sympathy? The leading members of the Crusaders will most likely huff and puff as they attempt to root out the source of the circulation, but their efforts would be pointless. Similar to how there were 7 traitorous Demon Lords in the Crescent Alliance, an entire nation was the joker in the army of the Crusaders.

I twisted the ends of my mouth.

“Have you still not grasped the meaning behind my words?”

“.....Yes, Your Highness. This one truly does not know.”

“I heard that you are the consultant of quite the number of Demon Lords. Marbas, the leader of the Neutral Faction and the ranked 5th Demon Lord is one of them, and so is the person whom I hold in high esteem, Her Highness Paimon. Moreover, oh, would you look at this? Surprisingly, do you not also lead the greatest firm in the demon continent and carry out trades with each and every country? Of course, your firm is just great enough to print out something like a couple of booklets with ragged covers and pitiable pages as many

times as you want.”

“.....”

The sound of Ivar Lodbrok’s breathing gradually died down.

It was simple. Since there was a massive hole somewhere in the army of the Crusaders, it was possible for the booklets to be distributed. This gap was undoubtedly the army of the Republic of Batavia. The monarch who had founded the republic was Demon Lord Paimon.

Adding to that, the vampire seated before me was the merchant who acted as Paimon’s exclusive consultant.

Was this not quite the impressive coincidence?

“Nevertheless, Chief. Is this not the rather strange occurrence? As I had said earlier, I had just returned from meeting with Her Excellency Barbatos and Her Highness Paimon—— and when I had questioned Her Highness Paimon about this matter, she stated that it was not her.”

The vampire trembled.

The trembling in his shadow was more intense than his actual body.

“Chief. Oh dear, Chief. Is this not strange? Is this not bizarre and peculiar? The location of where the seditious booklets are circulating from has been determined and the location of where the booklets are being printed from has been determined as well, but alas. How could this be? Only the person who had given the order for these booklets to be printed and circulated is nowhere to be found.”

“.....”

“Chief. I am a rational person. Even if a situation that does not make rational sense were to be pushed into my face, I am sensible

enough to still deduce a rational answer. Chief Lodbrok, do you perhaps know what the rational reasoning would be in this sort of situation?”

“.....”

“Oh dear. It seems that you do not know. Your head is rather lacking despite being referred to as the ruler of the Great Keuncuska. How about you, Lapis? If it were you, Lapis, how would you infer the answer?”

Lapis answered briefly.

“There is most likely someone in the middle who has superseded control, Your Highness.”

“Oh my. How could this be? How could someone dare to supersede control from the leader of the Mountain Faction? How could there be such a wretched fellow? I see that my love is able to say quite the terrifying things.”

I chatted while intentionally acting as if I were frightened. It was a cheap performance. However, if there is an audience, then even a cheap performance would seemingly have a smidgen of value. Lapis played along with my antics and bowed.

“This one apologizes. This humble one has said something which she should not have.”

“No, it is okay. What is there to apologize for when all you had done was make an inference? In any case, this is strange. As Her Highness Paimon is not a fool, if there is a person superseding control in the middle, then would she not have noticed?”

“Yes. Her Highness would have realized without fail.”

“And yet, she has not.”

“That is the case.”

“What does this mean?”

“It means that the culprit is someone whom Her Highness Paimon trusts completely and entrusts with tasks.”

Lapis answered immediately.

“It is most likely a personage who Her Highness is at ease with, as she believes that they would not dare to supersede control and deceive her.”

Precisely.

In other words, Paimon’s close aide.

Rank 12th Demon Lord Sitri.

“Oho…….”

I lamented deeply.

“If such a personage does exist, then it would be quite scary and terrifying. Would that not truly mean that there is a person out there who is able to freely ridicule both the demon and human continents? For them to impudently utilize the intelligence network which Her Highness Paimon had constructed however they please and deride the Crusaders. Although their real intention may have possibly been to please Her Highness Paimon, since they had proceeded with the insurrection while keeping it as a secret from Her Highness, it is an immense ridicule and a substantial disloyalty. How is this different to covering both of Her Highness Paimon’s eyes and playing tricks? Alas. I am deeply concerned.”

“…….”

“Nevertheless, how were the traces of disloyalty not caught? Since the intelligence network which they had used is solely the intelligence network of Her Highness Paimon, the reason why the intelligence agents had listened to that person’s orders is most likely because they

misunderstood that it was an order from Her Highness Paimon. If we were to summon the intelligence agents and question them, then the truth will easily be revealed. What type of person the culprit is, what name they have, and whom they had secret talks with, this will all be exhibited out in the open.”

I asked once more.

“Ivar Lodbrok.”

Similar to the act of stabbing a spear into a beast that was already bleeding from an arrow.

I, however, questioned him smoothly and with gentleness.

“Are you still unable to fathom a guess?”

“.....”

Finally.

The ruler of Keuncuska collapsed.

□ King's Mistress, Mixed Blood, Lapis Lazuli
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 11
Polles, Bruno Plains, Army of the Crescent Alliance

.....I see, this is the end.

I thought while gazing at the chief who had fallen into silence. The leading power of the Keuncuska was now done for. He may continue to live, but that will merely be a life of servitude as His Highness Dantalian's slave.

Lord Dantalian chuckled.

"Quite the entertaining event will most likely occur if I were to tell Her Highness Paimon about my rational deduction."

"....."

The owner of the Keuncuska trembled his shoulders in silence.

"You had already abandoned Her Highness Paimon once back in the council chamber of Niflheim. Although the issue at that time was resolved because Her Highness was at fault as well, how do you intend to endure now? Ivar Lodbrok, will you stab yourself and take your own life like that goblin, Torukel, had done?"

".....Your Highness."

"Now that I think about it, I should stop referring to you as a man, but as a girl. You are concealing your pretty little girl self with that appearance of an old man after all. Aha. Along with Sitri, since the two of you are miscellaneous things that no one knows whether you are a bastard or a bitch, birds of a feather flock together."

Chief Lodbrok fell down.

He fell from his chair, collapsed to the floor, and finally, his body toppled. With his entire body, the vampire did his all to apologize to His Highness with the utmost desperation.

“This one, has never done anything that may be troublesome to the demon continent……. Her Highness Sitri has been the close aide of Her Highness Paimon for a very long time. How, how could this one have known that that was a fake command? Ever since Torukel had taken his own life, this one has been put in a state where this one could not possibly dare to refuse an order from Her Highness Paimon…….”

“An impressive excuse.”

Lord Dantalian grinned.

“Let us see if Her Highness Paimon also finds this to be as impressive as I have.”

“Your Highness……. This old man. This old bat beseeches Your Highness. Although the Keuncuska may be a group of humble merchants, it is a place that helps the rivers and streams of the demon continent connect and flow into a lifeline. Please, consider the five hundred years of service which we had done and grant us mercy…….”

Lord Dantalian smiled more softly.

“Since you have accumulated all of that gold from those five hundred years of prosperity, if we take that away, then our expedition funds will never fall short.”

“Your Highness, O Greater Being…….”

In the end, the chief broke down into tears.

While shedding an endless stream of tears, the chief kissed the top of His Highness’ foot.

“This one shall obey all of Your Highness’ commands. Please,

bestow upon this one your royal grace, have mercy upon this one.....”

It is night.

I silently stared at a flickering candle in the tent. The flame continues to burn while completely oblivious to the fact that it was burning its own wick. On the floor where the wax drippings were falling, there was a single aged vampire.

Defeat is stigmatic and desecrating.

Because it has always been like that, that was what defeat was. If one is going to enter the gambling den of authority, then one must clearly know when to stop.

The gamblers who have had a peek at authority gamble whenever the sun has set and the night has begun. Betting their honor. Betting their wealth. The gamblers who have tossed their honor and wealth into gambling dens will, in the end, stake their own lives, but not only the life which they had lived until now, but the lives which they will continue to live from now on as well.

One day.

One day.

And then, one day, you realize that you no longer have any more days left to bet at the gambling den.

Until that day comes, Chief Ivar Lodbrok must devote the remainder of his life to His Highness Dantalian. That was the job which the chief had to carry out for the rest of his life.

His Highness stroked the head of the groveling vampire.

“From this day forth.”

And he then recited to him his new livelihood.

“You now have to kill the ones whom I command you to kill. Even if I were to tell you to throw away that old body of a doll, which you are currently borrowing, then you must do so without hesitation.”

“.....”

“If there is someone whom I have ordered you to spare, then spare them. Sitri may have sent you here to spy on me, but I shall send you to do the exact opposite. You shall spy on Sitri and report back to me. Become a double-spy and follow my commands.”

“.....”

“I advise that you do not even dream of betraying me. If I meet an untimely demise, then a rather interesting last will will be sent to Her Excellency Barbatos and Her Highness Paimon. I was considerate enough to make it so that even you, Chief, will be able to enjoy yourself to the fullest along with everyone else. You will also gradually come to know of this, but despite my looks, I am quite the considerate man.”

“This one has no questions, Your Highness.....”

“Tonight, the Crescent Alliance will withdraw.”

Without a sound.

A drop of wax flowed down the side of a candle.

“This has already been decided.”

His Highness Dantalian was smiling broadly.

The light formed a yellow mask on His Highness’ royal visage and trembled.

“Since you had sent that letter to His Excellency Marbas so soon, our schedule has gone awry.”

“.....”

“At this rate, we will have to face against the main force of the Crusaders and the dispatched troops of the Neutral Faction at both our front and rear, but we do not have the time for this.”

“Then how will we persuade the Neutral Faction……?”

“Is there a reason for us to appease the Neutral Faction in a deliberately swift fashion?”

“Pardon?”

“Allow the Crusaders to chase after us from behind and also allow Marbas to be filled with wrath and try to interfere with our retreat.”

“……?”

I also tilted my head at the words His Highness had just spoken.

For him to say that we had no reason to appease the Neutral Faction in a deliberately swift fashion. What did this mean? His Highness made an ambiguous smile and turned to look at me.

“Lapis. How about you try answering instead?”

“Yes, Your Highness.”

“Starting from now, try thinking from a different perspective. Our present situation appears urgent because we are trapped in our own shoes. Now consider the enemies’ points of view. Which side is currently in more of a rush?”

“…….”

I see.

“For Marbas, a purge had occurred in the main force during his absence. Would Marbas not be in a hurry due to this? For Elizabeth, she still does not know the intention behind our purge. Therefore, would Elizabeth not be in a rush?”

I could feel my eyes narrowing.

“Our forces are busy and their forces are busy as well, however, speed is always bound to be relative. Their forces are presumably more in a rush than our own.”

“That is correct. Lapis. In situations like this, what would be the appropriate way to act?”

I thought for a moment before answering.

“.....Pacifying the Neutral Faction is, of course, important. However, it is not as important as pushing our enemies into a state of confusion. Persuasion is something that can be pushed aside for later. In our present situation, our forces must focus on throwing the situation further into chaos.”

This was it.

This is the answer that I had come to. In short, chaos.

Excluding our own forces, we have to impose a battle of speed in order to prevent any of the groups from recovering their senses. By doing so, we will cause a greater state of confusion. By withdrawing before even a day can pass after we had carried out our purge, and by crossing over the Black Mountains within several days after having decided the retreat, we will push ahead and stab all of the Demon Lords who had betrayed our kind.

An unprecedented battle of speed.

That was the sole thing which the Crescent Alliance should be aiming at achieving.

What Lord Dantalian had pointed out is correct. Both the Imperial Princess of the Empire and Marbas of the Neutral Faction had reacted faster than expected, but why does that matter?

There is no reason for us to be more panicked than necessary in our

current plight. Essentially, the disconcerted side is theirs and not ours. We have the initiative. They will justly fear our latent energy as we were able to carry out our purge this quickly and this neatly.

We absolutely cannot lose this initiative.

In war, initiatives are secured solely through speed battles. The Imperial Princess of the Empire and Demon Lord Marbas are veterans. If we allow them to have even a moment of time, then they will immediately grasp the situation and attempt to steal the initiative. Time. It was solely a fight of time.

It was most likely because I had given the correct answer. His Highness grinned splendidly like a blooming poisonous plant.

“As expected of my love. That is so. Our forces will retreat immediately.”

I responded.

“As it so happens, the Imperial Princess had decided to clean out her own army, so a small panic has also occurred in the army of the Crusaders. The army which the Imperial Princess leads will become stronger. However, that is a strength that will come a day after. Our current situation is to deal with our aftermath, but this is actually an opportunity for us.”

Lord Dantalian then asked.

“Good. Truly remarkable. Lapis, what should be done in order for us to add a day onto the enemy and turn their one day into two?”

I answered.

“Shift the day which our forces are currently dealing with onto them. Our forces are currently executing the common soldiers of the seven Demon Lords, but it is troublesome. Killing is also a painstaking task. While sparing the common soldiers and leaving them behind in the military encampment, the rest of us shall leave.”

The candlelight swayed.

“Aha! For the Crusaders, this would be like a bunch of free exploits had fallen from the sky. An opportunity for them to obtain quite the number of enemy heads without having to shed a single drop of blood. During this war, if you exclude the Habsburg Empire, the Crusaders have fought quite pitifully. Would the other countries not be thirsty for exploits? This would be no different to a waterhole appearing before them while they are parched.”

The light flickered.

“Yes. They will undoubtedly become blinded. Although the Imperial Princess may see through the fact that this is all a trap, it does not matter. The Imperial Princess is the one who had obtained a monopoly of all of the glory by using the troops of the other nations. The other commanders are without a doubt jealous of the Imperial Princess. The time for them to pay the price for jealousy has now come.”

His Highness met his lips with mine.

“The enemy will become divided.” (Dantalian)

I met my gaze with His Highness’.

“The enemy will become weaker.” (Lapis Lazuli)

His Highness and I, for a long moment, overlapped our breaths with the sound of the other’s breathing. Lips slipped on lips and a moan went obliquely astray. Within the air where the candlelight was swaying, we held our breaths for some time. A senile vampire was staring at us, but it did not particularly matter. If a couple were to be concerned about the watchful eyes of their slave, then how would they possibly sleep together?

His Highness and I whispered to one another as if we were fornicating with our voices.

“Since our forces will have to push ahead, it will not be an easy path.”

“Our soldiers will have to march as lightly as possible.”

“How should we handle the provisions? I am not sure who, but would it not be difficult for you if we do not have a separate person to handle the supplies?”

“Yes. Although this one is not sure who.”

And then.

Without the need to say who was first.

His Highness and I turned our heads and looked down at the vampire who was kneeling on the floor. We stared at the top chief who had the most important role whenever the supply lines of the entire Crescent Alliance are pillaged. We gazed, at the person who had just recently become His Highness’ slave.

“.....”

The vampire received my and His Highness’ gaze in silence. Even though he had witnessed the sight of one of the most sacred individuals in all of demonkind mix together with one of the lowliest, the vampire solely had a wretched complexion. It is most likely because he understands his position.

Chief Lodbrok lowered himself even further and yielded with a voice that the defeated had to have.

“Give this one your command, Your Highness. This one shall obey.”

It is late in the night.

The candlelight spread a crimson color over the low breathing sound of the witches, and the sound of Lady Farnese sleeping with

gentle gasps flared out faintly.

While listening to the breathing of the shadows flowing in the night, I believed that this will be a long night.

□ The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 11
Polles, Bruno Plains, Army of the Crescent Alliance

Witch. Illegitimate child. Outcast.

They are all I have. I am all they have. Since a place where the only thing everyone had was the people around them, was a place that was strong on the inside, there was no way that it could fall apart. Similar to a flame that burned as a single mass no matter how many times you broke it apart, we were one. In the end, all we needed was a small pile of wood. And a certain amount of darkness.

Elizabeth. Sitri. Marbas. They were all obstacles that were complicated to deal with. Dealing with them one person at a time would be endless and boundless.

Therefore, let us burn them all at once.

“Are you done with your preparations?”

It was the end of the night before dawn could completely approach.

I put on my coat and exited the tent. In the wide open space where the executions had been taking place, Barbatos was standing there while chewing on an apple.

It wasn't just Barbatos.

There was also a bunch from the Plains Faction and the Mountain Faction who had avoided the purge……. There were no traitors here. Everyone here was either loyal to the blaze known as Barbatos or dedicated to the flame known as Paimon.

They roared at their units and lined them up.

— Stop making a racket, you punks. If you were ordered to do something, then do it. What's with all these complaints? Don't make me whip your buttocks…….

— Are you hungry for breakfast? All right. If someone finishes their preparations slower than the Mountain Faction, then I will behead that person and personally perform an ancestral rite for them, so if you wish to eat memorial service food, then keep whining…….

The soldiers had wound up moving before dawn could arrive, so they were sluggish here and there. However, I could see with my own eyes that their limbs were gradually becoming swifter. Everything was proceeding smoothly.

I spoke.

“Your Excellency. My unit has finished preparations.”

“Good.”

Barbatos grinned.

“Our Sir Dantalian, whose profound plot and lofty stratagem can cause both the heaven and earth to tremble, I acknowledge your annoyingness and somewhat acknowledge the brightness of your noggin. However, military affairs isn't something that can be easily managed with just your head. We will now be marching vigorously for an entire week. In the end, will deadwood like you be able to follow us without getting exhausted?”

I shrugged.

“I have already experienced this sort of rigorous marching back when I was coming to Your Excellency's rescue, but it turned out to be nothing special.”

“See? He’s an annoying son of a bitch.”

Barbatos burst into laughter.

Beside her, Paimon was covering her mouth with her fan. As these two Demon Lords respectively had pure, silvery white hair and red hair that was as crimson as blood, their figures could be clearly distinguished even during the night.

At that moment, a crow cried out from somewhere and flew up into the pitch black night sky. The crow flapped its wings above the area where the torches of the military camp could reach.

I let out an ‘Ah’ sound and spoke towards Barbatos.

“Your Excellency.”

“Hm?”

“Please kill that crow.”

Barbatos munched on her apple.

“Why?”

“It is a trifling creature which a spy had sent.”

Snap.

Barbatos snapped her fingers the moment I had finished that sentence. The sound of the air itself being split grew distant in an instant before lightly brushing through the air the crow was in. The crow sprayed black blood as it fell somewhere. Barbatos gave an order to her Royal Guards.

“Find it and bring it here.”

The soldiers brought the corpse of the crow and presented it to us around the time Barbatos had finished eating her apple and had tossed the core. There was nothing tied around the crow’s ankles.

Barbatos looked at me.

“There’s nothing?”

I took out a dagger and cut its belly open. Brown and blue colors were mixed together in its entrails. I dug through it and cut its stomach open. There was something inside of the stomach. I grabbed it with my fingers and showed it to the two corps commanders.

It was a note that was folded many times over.

“Heeh…….”

“Oh dear.”

Barbatos and Paimon both leaned in to look at the note with interested looks on their faces. The note was small, so it only contained a single line. The handwriting was ugly so it was clear that the writer had written this desperately.

Month 4, Day 11. Midnight. Crescent Alliance, preparing to withdraw.

Barbatos smirked.

“We’ve taken care of the traitors, but now it’s spies. The state of this person’s army must be quite remarkable. Haa, I have no idea what hope I’m trying to bask in by going to war with these things.”

“A monarch is an ocean, Barbatos. You have to indiscriminately accept even the murky streams of the people.”

“Just like your crotch?”

“Are those actually the only words that have been inputted into your brain?”

“I don’t know. Fuck. What do you expect me to do when curses come out all on their own whenever I see your face? Either change your face or take responsibility for my death. I know. You can’t do either, right? Just take the curses.”

Even while Barbatos and Paimon were spitting out the dawn air into the heart of the night, the troops had started to gradually become more in line. The sound of metal and footsteps pushed their way into the air. The banners that represented each respective Demon Lord swayed in an orderly manner. Rank 12th Sitri, Rank 13th Beleth, Rank 16th Zepar…….

Paimon spoke.

“This lady cannot believe that there was even once a time where she had had intercourse with you. With what belief did this lady ever consider you to be even remotely charming…….”

“What a coincidence. The same goes for me too.”

A couple of servants brought a bottle of wine and a pair of wine glasses to Barbatos. Barbatos poured a single glass and handed it to Paimon. Red wine. Before going to a large war, Demon Lords would always drink wine that is as red as blood in order to substitute formalities.

“So let’s go together, you fucking bitch.”

In the center of the troops. Barbatos’ Royal Guards raised their banners. In the sky, where the sun had yet to sprout, the torches acted in the sun’s stead and released a small gleam of light, and in that spot where the light illuminated was the maxim which Barbatos had formerly written fluttering in the wind.

Cultivate with my blood.

Befitting the supreme ruler who had declared she would present extensive plains to demonkind, it was arrogant. Barbatos was holding out the glass to Paimon.

Paimon lowered her fan and let out a sigh. She received the glass and slightly lowered her back. She then linked arms with Barbatos and——held the wine in her mouth. The two Demon Lords who had once vowed that they would live solely as enemies and die solely as enemies have, at this very moment, shared a glass that signified their renewed blood alliance.



I wonder if they had awaited solely this vow. The single group of flag bearers that followed Paimon raised their banners high.

Glory.

Perpetuity.

Eternity.

Make glory perpetual and bask in eternity.

Befitting the supreme ruler who had promised the demon continent eternal peace, it was a haughty maxim. Once Barbatos and Paimon had raised their banners, similar to when a signal fire is lit and the other signal fires on a mountain range follow suit, the other Demon Lords raised their banners wholly according to their ranks.

Our devotion is for her……

My wrath is larger than your fear……

Thou shall ask after the enemy……

All at once, the soldiers threw their torches on the ground and extinguished them. Darkness enveloped the world. It was still deep in the night, and as all of the flames to kindle the deep night had been extinguished, everything became silent. The instant the flames had disappeared, the maxims which the banners were proudly displaying were all plunged into darkness. The banners were extinguished and only their outlines remained in the darkness.

And then, after several dozen banners.

Since my banner was the final signal fire, it was the final banner to waver as an outline. It was deep in the night. Since it was shrouded in darkness, I had no way to see the words written on my banner. However, why would that matter?

During this war, I have constantly faced against things that I could not see. As long as this war was my war, this world was also my world, and that banner will command this and that side of the Black Mountains as solely my banner. Similar to how I am able to figure out many things despite being unable to see them, I knew the words that were fixated there.

Authority for blood.

Blood for authority.

Like a fire that burned as a single flame even if it were separated into many parts.

Even when Barbatos and Paimon argued heavily, the expedition of the Crescent Alliance continued. There was no need to even say it now since they have joined hands. We were strong. And we shall burn even stronger.

Barbatos spoke as she sipped the wine.

“One day, one of us will probably die.”

Paimon spoke.

“We will die eventually anyway. This is an undeniable fact.”

“Did you know? The way you or I will die has roughly been determined. If you die, then you will do so by my hands, and if I die,

then I will do so by your hands. We have a relationship that has determined how the other will die.”

“So what? That is similar to the line which you had said to this lady 500 years ago when you had confessed to me.”

“No, I was just curious. As I said, if we die, then we will do so by each other’s hands, and as you had said, we’re going to die anyway. If that’s the case, then think about it. If I end up being the one to remain, then wouldn’t that mean I’ll be killed by someone other than you? Who would that be?”

Barbatos smiled.

“If it’s not you, then I wonder who’s going to end up killing me. I can’t imagine myself being killed by anyone other than you. The fact that it can’t be imagined, the fact that it can’t be predicted. Isn’t this the biggest problem for people like us? Hey. Paimon. Can you imagine it?”

Paimon beamed.

“Stop talking bullshit and just drink the alcohol.”

“Haa, bitch. We don’t understand each other.”

Slowly.

The two Demon Lords emptied their wine glasses.

The Demon Lords threw their glasses on the ground and shattered them at the same time. The glass broke into a million pieces and scattered. Boisterously. Irreversibly. The wine which represented blood will go into their respective prayers and linger. Since the glasses were shattered and they had lost their way back, the vow was eternal.

“Well, whatever. Now then…….”

Barbatos took out a piece of parchment. It was the letter that was

sent by Marbas. Once Barbatos held the letter tightly in one hand, a wavering that was like a pure white blizzard burst out and reduced the piece of parchment to ashes in an instant.

Yes.

We are simply going to ignore this letter.

Whether Elizabeth pursues us or Marbas blocks our path, let them do what they want. We shall ignore them all and return deep into the Black Mountains. Pursue us and try to block us as much as you want.

Demon Lord Barbatos, the girl who always lived as the fiercest flame grinned.

“———Shall we go home, you dogs?”

Now then.

Let us dance.

☐ Kinslayer, Imperial Princess of the Empire, Elizabeth von Habsburg

Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 11

Polles, Bruno Plains, Army of the Crusaders

Our military encampment had become disorderly at night and we had beheaded twenty-two harlots. Seven small-fry administrators were made to disembowel themselves and two hundred forty-seven soldiers were burned alive. Once we had captured the two common soldiers who had escaped and dismembered them, the disorder in our army had vanished. A late spring fog had settled at dawn.

“.....”

It was quiet.

It was excessively silent.

Since a purge had started yesterday evening in the army of the Crescent Alliance, it was only appropriate for a couple of crows to have flown over here by now and given us the news about the aftermath. However, the only sound that could be heard was from the birds that lived in the wild. There was not even a single crow flying over from the other side of the Bruno Plains.

On the open ground where the heads of the harlots were hung and the soldiers were burned to death, the priests sang all at once.

— Forgive them. Forgive them. O Goddess of All who resides in the clearest of skies, please do not toss away these deeply sinful children even if they rise up. We shall look into their deep sins and devote our lives to allowing their souls to pass on. Watch over the heavens with mercy and magnanimity. Please forgive them, please forgive them.

Please take in the souls of heaven with the mercy of heaven…….

All of a sudden, the silence felt ominous.

When it is silent on all four sides and you are unable to grasp anything, there are people who favor that silence and there are people who are hostile towards it. I am a personage who always prefers the latter.

I ordered my commanders.

“Send in our scouts. Send them close. Since the morning fog is thick, it will be difficult to carry out espionage. Reconnoiter closely, but do so while crawling on the floor and not on horseback.”

“What should we tell them to scout for?”

“Anything.”

Once the time it takes to have a single meal had passed, the scouts returned.

“We could not see anything, Your Highness. Loud shouting and screams could occasionally be heard, but we could not hear anything more than that. Although we could not see properly due to the fog, it appears that the enemy’s camp and wooden fences are still sound.”

“How close did you go to scout?”

“We had crawled just close enough to be barely in the firing range of the enemy crossbows.”

“Go further. Go further in and report back to me.”

Another feeling of unease was added onto my heart. The scouts returned after taking twice the amount of time than previously.

“Your Highness. We could not see anything. There are no enemy

guards in their watchtowers. There are torches burning in each watchtower, but there is no enemy soldier looking after the fire, so it is extremely bizarre. The fog is indeed severe, but once we peered between the narrow gaps of the wooden fences, we were somewhat able to make out the enemy's border area. There was no one wandering around the outskirts."

"Were there even no patrols?"

"Yes."

"Were you still able to hear the shouts and screams?"

"Yes."

"Go in further. Climb over the fences and scout even the enemy camp. If it feels as if there are no obstacles, then go in deeply and take a look around. I shall allow you to go on horseback. I shall leave it to you guys, so move at your own discretion."

The ominous feeling continued to stack and stack until it eventually blackened my heart.

The sound of Demon Lord Dantalian laughing softly attached to that blackness like a scab.Did that man. Did they. Around the time an ember had sparked and was about to engulf my heart in flames, the scouts returned after a very long period of time.

"Your Highness. In the center of the enemy camp, there were corpses lined up and common soldiers, the numbers of which reach up to nearly the thousands, bound in either chains or tied up by ropes. They were all groaning as they had fallen into a pit. They are not prisoners from our side, but solely demonkind. We had gone through a couple of the enemy quarters, but there was no one. There were several scarecrows awkwardly looming over the wooden fences and the torches were all burning, but that was it. Other than that, there was some tower of skulls that was piled up high, but other than that, nothing else could be seen."

“Is there truly nothing at all?”

“Yes.”

The commanders looked at each other with perplexed faces. It was then that the ominous feeling which was licking at only my heart had seeped out and flowed into the mouths of the commanders. The commanders carefully glanced at me.

“Your Highness. We cannot lower our guards. The enemy may be using a deceitful tactic in order to draw us in…….”

“No.”

I shook my head.

“They have run away.”

“…….”

“Inform the other armies of the fact that the enemy has retreated. We must tell them quickly. Inform them that the Imperial Princess of Habsburg wishes to have a conference with them.”

The group of priests was still performing their memorial service within the military encampment. While ringing their handbells, they conveyed their hymn past the fog which the eyes of the people could not see through. Since the deaths of humans were an urgent situation to the priests, it seems they had to notify the world of it with their hymn and bells.

— Forgive them, please forgive them. Even if these children do not know the depths of their sins, please do not cast them away. We shall bury these children, so, O Goddess of All, if there is a soul which we were unable to entomb, then please nurse them in Heaven. Please bestow upon us your benevolence. Forgive them, please forgive them…….

Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 11.

The army of the Crescent Alliance is retreating.

Chapter Three

Hell

“———**L**ook here, Your Lordship.”

It happened late in the night.

We were making our way through a woodland path. Farnese, who had been marching as the spearhead of our troops, steered her warhorse towards my direction. She dismounted from her horse and pushed something out towards me. It was dark, so I could not see properly. Whatever she had in her hands looked similar to rubbish or gunk.

Once I examined it a bit more carefully, I realized that it was a kitten.

“Its life has been injured.”

To be exact, a dying kitten.

Half of the kitten, the other half of which having already declined into being a corpse, was also diving into the River Styx minute by minute. I wonder what sort of terrifying beast had gotten to this little critter. Despite it being late in the night, the sight of its internal organs oozing out from between the cracks of its injuries was being shown without any mosaics.

Speaking of no mosaics.

In this world, things such as adult videos, a modern convenience that is also referred to as porn, obviously did not exist.

According to the classification of sociology, a society where porn has yet to be invented was, at most, nothing more than a society that was on the border of being referred to as primitive. Despite my looks, I am also one of the Demon Lords who represent demonkind, so is this situation not woeful? This great one has the duty of enlightening

these barbarians as quickly as possible.

I had immediately gone into action.

Among the many magic tools, there was an item that recorded the scenery before it. The high-priced commodity known as the Memoria Artifact was an item which had a bad past record with me as it had screwed me over on various occasions. I had utilized this. The price was disgustingly high, but who cares? The billions of perverts of the past, present, and future all combined were cheering me on, I was certain of this.

That was why I had filmed it. The several times where I had slept together with either Barbatos or Lapis. In secret, without having received any sort of prior agreement with them.

And.

‘What is this, Your Highness?’

The very first adult video in the world was discovered in less than half a month since it had been completed.

‘Calm down, Lapis. Compose yourself and listen to my explanation. Even you will end up praising this lofty invention.’

‘Interesting.’

Lapis nodded. Fortunately, there were no signs that showed that she was upset. As expected of my lover who boasted a coldness that lasted all year round.

I harbored hope. If it’s Lapis, then she would definitely appraise this item accurately for its political value.

‘However, before listening to Your Highness’ explanation, there is something this one wishes to talk about. Your Highness, this is a rather serious topic.’

‘All right. Ask me anything. Be it the influence this invention will have in the world from now on, or the impact it will have on the continent——.’

‘Give this one at least a single reason why she should not kill Your Highness right this instant.’

She was incredibly pissed off.

I completely ignored something like my honor or whatever and prostrated. Everything was my wrongdoing and crime. In particular, the fact that I did not receive her consent was most likely the worst part.

The artifact that contained Lapis was disposed of on the spot without debate. In the end, I had forever lost the opportunity to leave my name in the history books of mankind as the founder of adult videos…….

“Your Lordship.”

And then, Farnese called out to me who had become lost in thought about the lack of mosaics.

“Why are you suddenly staring out into empty space with eyes that appear as if they had given up on everything in the world? Has Your Lordship’s brain perhaps become vacant? Hurry up and heal this life.”

Heal?

The cat’s breathing was nearly at its end. At the soonest, within 30 seconds. At the latest, its life will most likely come to a complete halt in less than 3 minutes.

I had also just sent the witches out on a reconnaissance mission. Even if I were to call them back in order to make them heal this critter, there would not be enough time. As this was a fact which anyone could tell simply by looking at the kitten, Farnese surely was not unaware of this either. Despite that.

“This young lady wishes to save it.”

Farnese looked straight up at my face.

When we had entered the Crescent Alliance and carried out an opening ceremony for our newly enlisted soldiers, you were the one who had personally cut down the miserable pack of dogs which you had cherished and raised with care, so how could you be opening your heart to the death of a kitten which you have no connection with……I, did not ask her this.

Through war, you have taken the lives of others repeatedly. Just the number of common soldiers you have slaughtered already reaches the tens of thousands, so what is your intention behind now referring to a single kitten as a life and requesting me to save it……I, did not inquire this.

Even now, the kitten’s wound is causing it to languish and suffer eternally so, if anything, the kitten would be better off if you put it out of its misery with your own two hands. What do you think about carrying that small life, putting it in your memory, and holding a funeral for it within your mind……I, did not give her this piece of advice either.

I waited.

“Your Lordship?”

Farnese tilted her head.

“Your Lordship.”

Farnese expressionlessly looked down at the kitten held in her arms and then gazed up at my face, she then repeated this motion over and over again, until eventually, an entire minute had passed. The kitten had a small head. Before long, the faint breathing of the small creature stopped. Once the breathing stopped, Farnese’s gaze also got caught there and paused.

“.....”

I slowly got down from my horse. Since I had not given the soldiers a separate military command, they forked around the two of us and continued their march. Dirt continued to crumble underneath the feet of the soldiers.

I knelt down before Farnese's feet.

I sat up straight.

I then lowered my head all the way to the ground.

“I am sorry.”

“.....”

“The reconnaissance mission was urgent. I had temporarily sent all of the witches out. It was my decision. I did not predict that something like this might occur.”

The soldiers passed by us and continued to advance. I could tell because of the footsteps that were shaking the dark ground around me.

Although the footsteps occasionally hesitated and tried to stop next to me at times, the footsteps had no other choice but to continue onward because of the marching of the comrades behind them. From time to time, instead of footsteps, the low sound of whispering could be heard as well. I left those alone and allowed them to pass by.

“Why.”

I heard Farnese's voice after a very long pause.

“Why are you apologizing, Your Lordship?”

“Due to my decision, you were unable to save a life.”

“It is a coincidence. Is there responsibility in a place where there are

no intentions? How can an apology be spoken in a place with no responsibility? Sending witches on a reconnaissance mission is an everyday occurrence in military affairs. On the other hand, trying to save the life of a small critter is not related to military affairs at all. As Your Lordship's general, this young lady is a personage who carries out the military affairs of a general. Rather than Your Lordship, would it not be appropriate for Your Lordship to reprimand this young lady for being unfaithful to her military duties?"

"I would have admonished you if you had requested that of me as a general. However, did you not come to me merely as a child with hope?"

"....."

"Currently, the witches are unable to utilize their familiars too much. This is also an order that I had given to them the other day. Because they do not have enough familiars to use as scouts, the witches have to personally fly up into the night sky. I am sorry."

I could vaguely hear the sound of a war song coming from the line further ahead of ours.

Uhu uhu..... like that, the soldiers attempted to alleviate their struggles from marching throughout the night by singing. Since our forces were making their way out of the woodland path, the singing easily mixed together with the sound of the wind that flowed through the forest. Woosh..... uhu rya..... The song which mixed together the sounds of the wind and forest sounded more like the disconsolate cries of a feathered creature or a wild beast than the sound of a person.

"Why does Your Lordship have to apologize?"

"Because I am your lord."

Farnese spoke.

"And is it because Your Lordship considers this young lady to be your daughter?"

“And because I have taken you in as my adopted daughter.”

“This young lady understands.”

Farnese laid something down beside my head. It was the kitten's dead body. The internal organs which the kitten could not completely let out while it was dying were finally all released once the kitten had died. Like so, because the distinction between the inside and the outside was gone, the kitten was now going to return to the soil.

“This young lady wishes to forgive Your Lordship.”

Farnese sat up straight with my head held in her hands. As she stretched her knees and stood up, she lifted up my body as well. Farnese stroked my cheek.

“So this young lady shall forgive you. Father.”

“.....”

I was forgiven.

I gazed down at the life that had ended and spoke.

“Child, are you not going to create a grave and give it a burial?”

“What are you talking about, Your Lordship? What a weird thing to say.”

Farnese pointed towards the kitten's dead body, the soil which the dead body was placed on.

“Did this young lady not bury it in this world just now?”

The child was smiling brightly.

I stayed silent for a moment while I stood before Farnese who now knew how to smile well.

When I looked around, the soldiers were marching.

Similar to a bunch of will-o'-the-wisps heading towards the afterlife, tens of thousands of soldiers were illuminating the night sky with the torches held in their hands. The radiant torches connected with one another and further intensified the illumination. The shadows shone by the torches easily hummed war songs.

It was a barbaric scene. Many of the goblins snickered while they moved their bodies around. Whenever the wolf people at the front of the formation raised their maws and howled, the wolf people behind them would follow suit, causing the military march to be lengthily connected by howls. The shadows danced and howled on the roadside.

Night Parade of One Hundred Demons.^[1] These words automatically came to my head.

Farnese spoke.

“I see that demons have quite the amount of nocturnal habits since they are not growing weary during a night march.”

“Even if nocturnal habits are a part of their physiology, does that make a march any easier? They are most likely joyous because they are returning home. The soldiers who leave on an expedition always welcome the order to go home the most.”

“Surely. If that is the case, then that would mean that the soldiers without a home would be less joyous.”

“That is so. We have a long way to go. Let us go quickly.”

We remounted our horses and grabbed onto their reigns.

If one were to turn around, then you would no longer be able to see the outline of your home.

□ Kinslayer, Imperial Princess of the Empire, Elizabeth von Habsburg

Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 11

Polles, Bruno Plains, Army of the Crusaders

Our army led our soldiers and approached the enemy encampment. It was quiet. The enemy troops that should have come out to oppose us were nowhere to be seen, but instead, only a dreary atmosphere loomed over the camp.

“.....”

“.....”

Since the nobles were strangers to this sort of bleakness, they did not utter a single word even as they scoured the enemy base while on horseback. Even though this was the very enemy base which they wanted to crush and destroy so much, now that they were actually here, there was nothing to crush or destroy. One of the nobles simply pointed at the lofty tower of human bones that was located in the center of the enemy camp once they noticed it.

“What exactly is that supposed to be? How bizarre.”

“That is a tower which the enemy general, Farnese, had collected and piled up.”

I answered. The enemy general was not considered as a noble since she had been sold as a slave and had murdered her own biological father. Perhaps she was not even considered as human.

“They all appear like skulls in my eyes.”

“Be grateful that your eye sockets are healthy. That is a tower made solely from the skulls of humans.”

“.....”

“I heard that the enemy general has a hobby of beheading humans, skinning their heads, and making them a part of her eternal collection if they are to her liking.”

We brought our horses close to the tower of skulls. The sky was low since the fog had yet to recede, so the tower was tearing into the center of the low sky.

The nobles murmured. Their voices were filled with fear.

“Was the enemy general not a youngster who was clearly either 17 or 18 years old?”

“A 17-year-old girl with beautiful blonde hair. With her charming beauty, she would have received a lot of adoration if she were to have gone to social circles.”

The nobles went silent.

“Is there a problem, noblemen?”

The ones who could not stay silent vomited at the feet of the tower of skulls.



In the place where the Demon Lords must have rested as recently as yesterday, the leading figures of the Crusaders held an emergency meeting.

— The enemy has evaporated.

With the current situation of the Crescent Alliance having abruptly retreated before them, this is what the nobles had declared. That they evaporated. Because the way the nobles played with their words was foolish, I slowly knitted my brows.

“The word you noblemen are using is unusual. The enemy forces did not disappear spontaneously after being here for a moment. They have led their troops towards the opposite end of the Bruno Plains. Therefore, it would be correct to refer to this as a retreat and not an evaporation.”

“Your Highness, regardless of whether you refer to this as a retreat or an evaporation, is this still not a peculiar occurrence?”

“Sir, since your breath still reeks of vomit, I suggest you go and wash your mouth out first. Once you have washed it out, do it once more. I am unsure as to whether you have always had a foul breath or not, but your breath is severely rancid at the moment. It is making me dizzy.”

“Pardon……?”

“Could it be that your wife has to smell this stench every morning? Your wife’s mornings must be quite blessed now that you are out on a distant battlefield. Since you are gifting happiness to your wife even while a long distance away, you are indeed worthy enough to be known as a model husband throughout all ages. Please give my regards to your wife.”

“…….”

Shortly after, the noble returned.

The imperial family of the Habsburg Empire is no different to a rotten pile of garbage among piles of garbage as their basis is in incest

and they have also made a side-branch in adultery, but there is a single good thing about being born there as the imperial princess, and that is the fact that I am able to freely berate aristocrats. I am not boasting, but I am an imperial family member that has a lot of expertise in berating nobles.

Once we had thoroughly investigated the enemy camp, the day had already become dark. Soldiers were illuminating the surroundings of the meeting room with their torches.

“.....What should we do now?”

A noble from the Republic of Batavia opened his mouth.

“I was dispatched from my country after being given the order to defend the Bruno Plains at any cost. If the demons have given up on the plains and retreated, then regardless of any military merits, I have already performed my duty faithfully.”

“With all due respect, but that is the same for this major general as well.”

A young duke from the Empire of Francia continued.

“The royal command His Highness had given to this major general was to protect the humankind that resides beneath the plains. If the enemy has retreated, then would that not mean that they had run away to the other side of the Black Mountains? There is no humankind there that this major general has to protect. No, it would be troubling if there were.....”

The young duke let out a sigh as he shrugged his shoulder. The other nobles chuckled.

Hoh.

I raised the corners of my mouth.

“I have no idea what you noblemen are saying. The enemy forces

have urgently retreated in the middle of the night. How large were their forces? Were they not lacking a little under a hundred thousand? An army of a hundred thousand had curled their tails between their legs and retreated, so how could they possibly be in good order?”

“.....Nevertheless, Your Highness. Even if they are no longer in good order, their military strength is still a hundred thousand. If they take thirty thousand from that hundred thousand and attach those troops at their rear, then breaking through that would be an incredibly strenuous task.”

“Are you now trying to make me laugh to death? If someone else were to hear you, then they would most likely assume that our military strength is only twenty thousand and not a hundred thousand. Whether the enemy forces make thirty thousand troops defend their rear or situate fifty thousand troops at their rear, why would that matter? All we have to do is sweep their troops and overwhelm them in a single moment. I am asking you all this just in case, but noblemen.”

“.....”

“Are you perhaps afraid?”

Silence.

I looked around.

All of the nobles avoided my gaze.

It was strange, so I rephrased my words.

“I asked you all. Are you noblemen trying to take it easy because you are afraid of Farnese, the enemy general?”

“.....”

Aha.

These noblemen were trembling.

It has only been a couple of days since our entire army of a hundred thousand had been toyed with by the seven thousand troops led by Farnese. Their memories of that day were still clotting their hearts with fear. These fellows who respectively claimed to be generals and boasted about being knights were quite the impressive sight.

“The other day, I had rescued you noblemen from a crisis. Since the crisis of that day was a crisis where your lives were on the line, you could say that I had saved your lives. The person who had saved you is now commanding you to pursue the enemy. Do you intend to disobey?”

One after the other, the nobles opened their mouths, but they soon shut them. They repeated this several times until eventually, they all began to speak indiscriminately.

— The favor which Your Highness, the Honorable Imperial Princess of Habsburg, had done for us is so deep that there is no true path of paying back our debts, however, Your Highness is not this major general’s king. If the order from this major general’s own country and Your Highness’ order were to go in the same direction, then this major general would more than gladly obey Your Highness’ commands, but in a situation like this…….

— Your Highness, and my fellow noblemen. I am ashamed to be the one to say this, but more than anything else, we must always consider the worst-case scenario. What will we do if this were all simply a stratagem to lure us into desperately pursuing after them……?”

— The general is right. If the enemies are not defending themselves with twenty or fifty thousand soldiers, but instead, they are protecting themselves with all one-hundred thousand of their troops, and by that, if we are not the ones in pursuit but are actually the ones being

lured into an ambush…….

— This one apologizes to Your Highness, but…….

— We are honored, but…….

Words.

Underneath the place where you could clearly see up the tower of skulls, underneath the pitiable skulls that were dead and thus had no eyes in their eye sockets and no mouths in their mouth holes, the nobles continued to speak in a tone that sounded as if it did not matter what they talked about or what they looked at.

“…….”

I slowly shut my eyes. Once they were shut, the blood and guts that were spilled by the corpses during the purge yesterday approached me as a scent. Even though there were a lot of still living demons tied up in the enemy camp, the nobles before me were delighted since they were treating those demons as free exploits of war.

Do they intend to be satisfied with the trash given to us as a free share from the enemy army's winnings?

Do they intend to behead the prisoners whom the enemy had left behind as a contribution and use them as exploits? If they split this up among the nations here, then each nation would be able to take several hundreds. If they hang up the hundreds of demon heads and return triumphantly to their own countries with them, then it would make for quite the pathetic pretext. Instead of trying to win as defeated dogs, these men were already desperately trying to not be defeated…….

Fools.

They were looking down on the people.

The soldiers you are returning to your countries with are no longer simple soldiers, but germs that have been infected by Dantalian's poison.

Even if only one out of ten soldiers possessed the booklet with the speech written on it, that will spread to a hundred once they return to their homelands. That hundred will infect a thousand and it will run as rampant as the Black Death. Are the emperors and kings whom you all serve good and wise kings? We are currently in a turbulent period where revolts occur even when there are no epidemics, but do you believe that you can prevent those flames? With what courage are you trying to hold onto the flames which you are unable to block with even your bodies?

There is no other choice but to place an even bigger flame down.

I opened my eyes.

"You are all noisy. Stop babbling wantonly and give me a short answer. Those of you who will obey my military command and pursue the enemies, quietly raise your hands. The rest of you, shut up."

"....."

The useless words naturally subsided.

While the majority of them kept their mouths shut, hands started to go up by ones and twos.

The General of the Kingdom of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Grand Master of the Kingdom of Teuton, and the mercenary captain who was working for the army of the Kingdom of Brittany, but was left in a vague situation as the queen had returned to her home country.....

Good. With these three people combined, we will just barely have a military strength of about thirty thousand. The three of them were all nations that had cavalry units, so it was perfect. They most likely

raised their hands because they were confident in their ability of pursuit.

“I am the successor of the Habsburg Empire. I am not the successor of the family which you all respectively serve. Will you still heed my commands?”

The General of the Kingdom of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth lowered his head.

“Since you have saved my life once, I shall devote my life to you once.”

The Grand Master of the Kingdom of Teuton put his helmet on.

“Our king had ordered us to put an end to as many demons as possible. As the major general, this is in spite of myself, but it appears that joining forces with Your Highness the Imperial Princess is the correct path to carry out our king’s royal command.”

The mercenary captain lowered his back slightly.

“Her Highness the Queen of Brittany had left without giving us the rest of our pay. I am only saying this because she is not present, but she is deplorable to a certain degree. If she were not present in this world entirely, then I would have said that she is really deplorable, but since she still resides in this life, I have to practice good manners. I heard that Your Highness the Imperial Princess provides generous compensations. If Your Highness the Imperial Princess pays the remaining half of our backed pay, then we will follow your orders.”

I nodded.

“Not bad. Since a person who knows honor, a person who knows loyalty, and a person who knows money have gathered here, with just us alone, we can easily rival the strength of a single nation. I order you, noblemen, to pursue.”

I then turned to look at the dogs and hogs that did not raise their

hands.

“You all can rest easy here. It seems that there is no reason for me to tell you all to know shame. As there are expectations one should have towards others and expectations one should not have towards others, would telling you all that you are barefaced not be a part of the latter?”

“.....”

“Regardless, there is a trivial request which I would like to ask you all. Share with each of us one of your banners. I know. It is a difficult request to heed. I shall request something more difficult. Take out one thousand and five hundred of the captured prisoners over there and hand them over to me. If you believe that these are truly difficult requests, then consider these requests as the same value of the lives which I had saved and let us call it quits with these.”

The nobles slowly bowed their heads.

The Grand Master then asked.

“When shall we begin the pursuit?”

I looked across the plains. The night was falling upon us.

I ordered.

“Now.”

□ **The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian**
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 12
Polles, Army of the Crescent Alliance

A battle of speed. From now on, it was a battle of speed.

In our perspective, the Demon Lords who lived an idle life north of the Black Mountains were traitors, and in their perspective, we were a rebel army. Who the traitors are and who the rebels are, this will most likely be determined by the victors of the war. This was obvious. In order to become victors, we had to cross the Black Mountains and return home as soon as possible.

I spoke.

“Do not be concerned about whether it is day or night and simply continue marching. The armies of the Plains and Mountain Factions withdrawing, in and of itself, is what is important. Do not allow the group of traitors to even call together their soldiers. It should be fine to rest momentarily once you have reached the Black Fortress.”

It was exactly for times like this that I had captured both the Black and White Fortresses.

The bridgehead that was the fastest path to advance into the continent was also the fastest pathway back to one’s mainland. I did not capture this strategic point in order to simply attack the enemy. It was in order to easily receive supplies and also be able to calmly counteract if the situation in the mainland were to ever become problematic. Going through all that arduous effort in order to take the head of Margrave von Rosenberg was worthwhile.

Barbatos spoke.

“I also agree that we should retreat quickly, but what are we going

to do about our rear? Dantalian, as you had said, don't the Crusaders have an imperial princess who was born between a monster and a beast that had incestual relations and interbred?"

"It is fine. I shall do what I can to block the pursuers."

"Hooh? Do you think you can manage the pursuers all by yourself?"

"If I am to be more exact..... I am incredibly sorry, but among the people here, the only military service member who is capable of managing the Imperial Princess Elizabeth von Habsburg is my acting general. Your Excellency Barbatos. Your Highness Paimon. Asking the two of you to do this would be asking too much."

"....."

Even if you glare at me with such dissatisfaction, it cannot be helped. Before it was a matter of ability, it was a matter of talent. The kid, Farnese, had a gift that was capable of grasping battles themselves as melodies. Similar to how there are people who are lunatics since the moment they are born, there are people who are born while possessing these sorts of talents.

"There is also another reason why I must be the one to manage the rear more than anyone else. In the first place, for what reason did Your Excellency Barbatos keep me alive? Is it not because Your Excellency had keenly felt from your previous defeat the fact that it would be difficult for Your Excellency to handle the Imperial Princess of the Empire all by yourself? Since Your Excellency has spared my life, I should be worth my keep."

"You're barefaced as well. Why are you the one saying that?"

Barbatos snorted.

"All right. Dantalian. There's no reason for me to stop you if you're going to volunteer to take the short stick. Go ahead and try to obstruct the Crusaders' pursuit with the seven thousand troops you

brought with you.”

“.....”

Paimon was looking this way with a worried expression. Her eyes appeared as if they were asking ‘would it really be okay?’ as they also worried about my safety. I smiled slightly.

“This is for the sake of the demon continent. Do not worry, Your Highness.”

“Dantalian.....”

A somewhat moved expression appeared on Paimon’s face.

I could hear the sound of affection points going up in real-time. At this point, my image has most likely been glamorized in Paimon’s head as a schemer who uses any means necessary for the sake of the peace of the demon continent. The comical thing was the fact that she was not excessively far from the point.

“Ah—.”

While Paimon and I were both imagining separate goals, a languid voice came from the side. Once we turned our heads, there was Demon Lord Sitri standing there with her left hand raised.

“Big sis. About that, can I also go to the rear and block the pursuers? The most difficult job in this retreating battle is obstructing those pieces of garbage that are pursuing us, so I feel like it would be shameful if we left that all in the hands of our youngest protege.”

.....Again she’s.

Paimon blinked.

“Oh dear. If you say that you are willing to do so, Sitri, then I would naturally feel reassured, but..... Is that all right? Sitri, you should be aware since you have also faced against the Imperial

Princess. This will not be an easy task.”

“Ehehe. Well, I’m not exactly going to be stopping her by myself. I’ll be planning together with our protege here and the human girl. That’s okay, right, Skinnybones?”

Sitri looked this way and smiled gently. Her smile was as natural as the fragrance of dirt emitting from a country woman.

“Despite my looks, I’m confident in my fighting ability more than anything else. If we fight together, then I’ll definitely be of some help. Ah. Would I perhaps be a hindrance to you if I’m present?”

“That is not so.”

I bowed my head.

“If Miss Sitri provides this one with her assistance, then it would be like receiving a thousand troops and horses. This one welcomes Your Excellency with open arms.”

Since the Mountain Faction had sent a Demon Lord, the Plains Factions could not stay idle. Among her subordinates, Barbatos sent Rank 16th Demon Lord Zepar. The meeting was adjourned like that.



On my way out after the meeting was over.

Because we had marched throughout the entire day, it was already dark. After resting here momentarily, Barbatos and Paimon will resume their retreat. I gazed at the other side of the sky and imagined the hooves of the enemies that were approaching.

Was the Imperial Princess Elizabeth chasing after us without rest right now? How many troops did she have with her? We had purposely left the prisoners behind. How well did my dissolution tactic work, I wonder.....

The pursuing forces will most likely have less than fifty thousand troops, but more than twenty thousand troops. The imperial army of Habsburg will obviously take part in the pursuit. The other nations I should be anxious about would probably be the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Teuton. Those two nations share their borders with the demon continent after all. No matter the circumstances, those two nations have no other choice but to be hostile towards us.....

If these three nations all participate in the pursuit, then their military strength will reach an astounding number of thirty thousand. This will not be easy. There was no reason for us to wipe out the pursuers. Holding on until Barbatos and Paimon safely cross the Black Mountains. A delaying tactic. That was enough.....

“Seems like you have a lot of thoughts running through your head in various ways, Skinnybones. Why is it that you have a lot on your mind whenever I see you?”

At some point, while I was heading back to my quarters while also in deep thought, Sitri was at my side. I put my thoughts aside and bowed respectfully.

“The Imperial Princess of Habsburg is a terrifying human. The pursuers will be precipitous and tenacious. There is a need for our side to also be fully prepared in order to fight back.”

“Mhm. You have to stubbornly declare that the Imperial Princess is a scary human after all. If you don’t, then no one will forgive someone like a human girl for going around acting like a general. Isn’t that right? The reasons why you should have a head attached to your neck would also decrease.”

“.....”

“You’re really hardworking, Skinnybones. I don’t get bored no matter how much I watch you. Yup. How should I say it? Do you not have that kind of experience? Those times when you absently stare at an ant wiggling around on the ground for no reason whatsoever. That kind of feeling—.”

Ehehe, Sitri laughed.

“Sorry. You wanted to monopolize the exploits by blocking the pursuit by yourself, right? By doing so, you would have been able to raise the reputation of the human girl you bring around with you by that much. But that’s too bad, hm? I can’t sit around and let you monopolize the ball, Skinnybones.”

“Your Highness. I will not deny that I did not have that sort of intention, but…….”

“Yup. It’s not that you didn’t have that sort of intention, but that that was the only intention you had.”

“…….”

“Insects are interesting. Just watching over them is interesting. Why do ants move around like that without taking any breaks? How are honeybees able to easily maneuver when hit by the rain even though they have hair? Why do fireflies live while illuminating their bodies and entice humans by doing so? Although there are times when I get so enthralled while watching these insects that I unconsciously end up sentimentalizing that they are all doing these things in order to make the world beautiful…….”

Whenever the soldiers walked passed the two of us with torches in their hands, they would salute us. We did not receive their salutes. Sitri was smiling with her eyes and looking at me only.

“Ei. That’s a misunderstanding. They’re just doing all that because they want to live. Isn’t that right? In order to live, they either become beautiful by chance or they become unsightly by chance. You’re the same, Skinnybones. To the exact same degree, you’re like a bug.”

“.....”

“For the peace of the demon continent? For the glory of the Crescent Alliance? Ahaha. You may be able to deceive big sis with those words since she’s someone who sincerely believes in those things, but Skinnybones, I know for certain that you aren’t that kind of person. You reek. The scent of a bug that has rolled around in shit for all of its life emanates from people like you to an intolerable degree—.”

Yes.

That was a fact which I could not deny.

Since a stench that could not be obstructed even with that innocent smile of hers was also exuding from the beaming woman before me.

People were capable of recognizing their peers. In that regard, Sitri and I were undoubtedly similar types of people.

It was a matter of course that people would be capable of recognizing others who have lived their entire lives in a way similar to their own, but there are times when those relationships work out well and advance into being first loves, and there are other times when those relationships make the two people into mortal enemies. The standard by which those relations were divided, was most likely excessively simple.

“Your Excellency.”

“Hm?”

“Are you that afraid of being at Her Highness Paimon’s side and attending to her?”

Sitri tilted her head.

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“Is Your Excellency not also referring to yourself as a bug-like fellow?”

The night.

As the soldiers went further into the distance, the line of torches followed suit. Similar to how there was a lasting mute vibration after the end of a song, even as the light grew distant, it illuminated the darkness of the road before vanishing. Sitri became shrouded in darkness and stared at me with turbid eyes.

“Your Excellency enjoys reproaching this one, but this one apologizes. In the end, the words which Your Excellency spit at this one will simply return to Your Excellency as is.”

“This is strange.”

Sitri tilted her head further and become further enshrouded by the night. Her face was expressionless.

“This is really strange. Was it yesterday, or the day before that? Didn’t we clearly define our standings? Is it perhaps my memories that are faulty? Or is there a problem in my brain—? Cause from what I can see, you’re messing with me right now, Skinnybones.”

“Your Excellency will probably be incapable of feeling interest towards words such as peace and glory throughout the rest of your life. I understand. The intriguing part is the fact that Your Excellency feels as if that personality of yours is, from beginning to end, wrong.”

“Skinnybones.”

“Does Her Highness Paimon appear that blinding to Your Excellency?”

“Dantalian.”

“It is only right for all people to be equal. If there are no nations like that, then you just have to make one from now on. With just that

simple reason, Her Highness Paimon had erected a republic. There are people in the world who live simply because of that reason alone. There were……. Did Her Highness Paimon, did Her Highness Paimon's form, appear beautiful to such an extent?"

"I, definitely warned you."

"Compared to her, how is your own self like? Is Your Excellency not a piece of trash who does not feel inspired by anything……? My apologies, Miss Sitri. Your Excellency has already admitted it. Your Excellency has acknowledged that while living, one will become beautiful by chance and become unsightly by chance. If we follow Your Excellency's pet theory, then even if Her Highness Paimon appears beautiful, this is solely by chance, and even if Your Excellency is as unsightly as a bug, this is also solely by chance. In the end, it is all the same. It is the same standard. There is no need to deny it. There is no special difference between Her Highness Paimon and Your Excellency——."

White static flickered before my eyes.

Once I had come to my senses, I found myself on the ground and breathing heavily.

A sticky feeling. The sensation of something shattering.

I instinctively gripped my right shoulder. A sizzling pain was running rampant. My skull felt prickly. Sitri had grabbed my shoulder and broke it in an instant.

"……Hu, haa……."

"Ah."

The tone of her voice sounded like a person who had done something by accident. A tone with a weight that felt as light as that was flowing over my head.

"Sorry. I sometimes, really sometimes do things like this. I lose my

rationality. But don't blame me too much. Normally, I give about two warnings before I lose my rationality, but you're the one who ignored them, right? Does it hurt a lot?"

Sitri lowered her back. I was barely able to muster enough strength to look up, but once I did, I saw that Sitri had a sincerely worried look on her face.

Her eyes looked so feeble that if I had forgotten my own family tree, then I may have mistaken this woman as my biological older sister. Is it not fortunate that the child who could have possibly been my biological older sister was stillborn?

Sitri muttered to herself 'What to do, what to do……' as she stroked my injured shoulder.

"So why did you act up like that?"

She then dug her finger into my injury.

"———!"

An intense pain.

I tried to let out a cry, but it was impossible. Sitri had blocked my mouth with her other hand. Press, preeesss……. Slowly, while opening up my wound, each time Sitri's finger wiggled inside of my flesh, an electric current went down my spine. All of the nerves in my body felt like they had been torn.

I lost the strength in both my arms and legs and fell forward. Sitri received that body of mine in her embrace as if she were some benevolent priest. She whispered into my ear.

"Yup, good boy. Good."

"……! ……uk, ……."

"You'll be nicer from now on, right? Don't act so conceited. Don't

act like you know it all either. Don't get greedy in order to get somewhere too high up, and don't get unreasonably jealous just because you want to know too much..... Okay?"

This damn psychopath.

"I know. I know you better than anyone else. Big sis Paimon doesn't know you and Barbatos probably doesn't even try to know you. Skinnybones, children like you are the type of people who I understand the most in the world. It's hard, right? It's difficult to endure the world since you were born much smarter than others, right.....?"

".....,"

"You want to live while looking down at them all. You want to live while crushing them all beneath you. It's really fine. People, even Demon Lords, can be modest to others. Isn't that a relief? The fact that a bug like you can also be modest. Skinnybones, how many people have you killed so far? You even started something like a war..... haa. It's all your fault, isn't it? In the first place, you're a person who was wrongly born. A child who shouldn't have and would have been better off not being born. So..... from now on, let's live while atoning for your sins, okay?"

Sitri removed her finger from my wound. I let out a gasp. Sitri then grabbed hold of my face with her hands and held it in place so that I was staring straight at her.

She touched the corners of my eyes. They were wet.

"Don't worry. You may be a dirty beast, but big sis Paimon isn't. Skinnybones, you should also devote yourself to big sis' ideals. If you do that, then even your body will at least be a slight bit useful. All right? Don't misbehave. Even that succubus girl with arrogant eyes who has forgotten her place."

Lapis Lazuli as well.

“Even that human girl who should have just obediently killed her breath while living in a whorehouse after she was sold as a slave, but was instead taken under your wing and is now slaughtering her own kind.”

Laura De Farnese as well.

“Even your royal guard girls who survived until now by spreading their asses to all sorts of Demon Lords.”

Humbaba and the other witches as well.

“Although you’re all rotten mongrels. Although you’re all pieces of trash that would have made the world a better place if you all weren’t born, it’s okay. It’s all okay while you’re following big sis Paimon. You can breathe. Realize your baseness by yourselves and become modest. Okay?”

I did not answer.

I simply glared at Sitri with pain-filled eyes.

Sitri smiled as if she were feeling sorry for a troublemaking child.

“What a pitiful thing.”

“.....”

“A pitiful thing that is beyond salvation and was born astray. A thing that was born broken. A thing that has become more broken after birth. Why is it that venomous snakes like these continue to be born into the world? If they’re going to be born broken, then it’d be better if they just died the moment they’re born. It’s a difficult thing. It’s a difficult thing to understand. I’ll sympathize with you all. I’ll guide you all. It’ll probably be difficult to throw away your greed, but I’ll help you throw it aside. It’s a difficult path. I understand. I’ve walked that path before after all. Even the small grains of dirt scattered across the road will hurt if you step on them with your bare feet. You guys don’t know pain because you’ve been stepping on dirt

with the soles of your leather shoes. Your greed is your leather. Take it off. Throw it away. Acknowledge the fact that you all are worthless and unnecessary pieces of garbage. Yeah. It's a difficult path. It's difficult to do."

However, Sitri uttered and stroked my cheek.

"Repent as best as you can."

"....."

"I'll repel our pursuers. If I make my soldiers lie in wait around the narrow path and ambush the enemy as they pass by, then even that Imperial Princess won't be able to do much. They've most likely been moving nonstop throughout the day and night after all. Skinnybones, just go to the back and be on standby. The hardest task for people like you is being made to wait without being able to do anything, isn't it?"

Although I was twisting my body in pain, I managed to barely raise the corners of my mouth. This Demon Lord had pointed at me and said that I was pitiful. It has been a long time since I last received sympathy from someone, so it was not that bad. The problem was the fact that, as expected, I was starting to feel sympathy for this woman as well.

".....With things like this..... I am unsure as to which side is trying to monopolize the exploits now. Are you that afraid, of this one's acting general..... standing tall as the ruler of the battlefield?"

"Yup. It'll be troubling if you freely touch the political situation any more than this."

So is that why you are saying that you will be the one to obstruct Elizabeth Atanaxia Evatriae von Habsburg?

That girl. That girl who was born as an emperor's daughter and had torn off the skin of her siblings with her own hands. That girl who, in the original timeline, had exterminated all of the Demon Lords and established an empire. That monster.

All right. On one side was a woman who had thrown herself away, and on the other side was a woman who had thrown the world away. Watching the two of them oppose one another and seeing who wins was not that bad of an idea. However, I shall make a single prediction.

You will be defeated.

Ungracefully. Without even being able to counterattack. You are competent, but since a person who is more competent than you is your enemy, you will face utter defeat.

What sort of expression will you make? Will you resent the world? Will you curse at yourself? Will you forever abandon the world as something to resent and eternally leave yourself as someone to be cursed.....?

Similar to how you are sympathizing with me, I sympathize with you as well. O Demon Lord whose hair color is the same as both water and fire. What else can the world be to you except Hell?

It was at the time the two of us were pushing each other back with our breaths.

“——Sitri? Are you over there?”

Paimon's voice could be heard from a distance away.

Twitch.

Sitri's body moved. I also drew my brows together. Once I looked over her shoulder, I could see Paimon tilting her head towards our direction from about 20 footsteps away.

It was night.

A peculiar tension bound itself around Sitri and myself. In her position, it was most likely fortunate that she was holding onto me. My body was exquisitely hidden so Paimon could not see me from the

position where she was standing. Sitri glanced at my eyes for an instant before speaking in a voice that sounded no different to her casual tone.

“.....Yeah, big sis. I’m here. What’s up?”

“You did not return to our quarters no matter how long I waited. Rather, is something the matter, Sitri? Why are you crouching on the ground like that?”

“Ah, it’s just. I found a dead stray dog.”

Sitri spoke in a voice that sounded jubilant. With only her gaze, she spoke to me with the coldness of her eyes.

Be quiet. Shut up.

“A stray dog? Really, Sitri. Even though you cut down humans with ease while on the battlefield, you are kind to animals like cats and other creatures of the sort. Is it already dead? You are trying to bury it, right? Let this lady assist you.”

Ehehe, Sitri’s mouth laughed.

“No, it’s okay, big sis. This fellow spilled a lot of blood as it died. I have no idea how it survived with this much blood in its body..... I’m, sort of really soaked. I don’t want to show my dirty appearance to you, big sis, so you can go back to the quarters first.”

If you move your mouth even slightly, Sitri’s eyes spoke.

“Truly, this child is warmhearted..... All right, this lady understands. But do not return too late. This lady will be departing with Barbatos soon. Sitri, we will be unable to see each other for a while, so let us share some drinks.”

Big sis, Sitri’s mouth was delighted.

“Of course. If I don’t go to see big sis off, then who will? I’ll be there

as soon as I bury this dog and get washed up, so wait for me there. I actually have a bottle of alcohol that I've been keeping to myself for a long time just so I could drink it with you, big sis."

I'll kill you, Sitri's eyes threatened me.

"....."

To her, the world was simply an enemy, a danger, and a wall. I called the lives whose worlds were enemies, dangers, and walls, beasts. Is she a beast? Was she a beast?

"Oh my, this lady is looking forward to it. Your preference in alcohol is surprisingly luxurious after all. This lady will make sure to drink it all."

"Ei, drinking it all would be just mean. Big sis is also a surprisingly good drinker. Make the one on duty today prepare some snacks. I'll definitely be there soon."

I simply watched the one-man play this woman was performing from up-close.

While I watched her, I recalled the noises that I had left behind in my previous life. The study. The loud shouting flowing in from outside of the door. The woman who had rushed to me and apologized. The sound of music.....

Yes. It was music. It was a melody. What sort of gap must they cross in order for it all to become a melody?

To some, life was nothing more than a couple of noises. Once, twice, thrice, and if you are lucky, it sparkles four times. Something that struggles shortly but ends as a short vibration before coming to a close.

Something that could have possibly been connected, but, in the end, could not be connected because it had been forgotten.

Something that will never be able to stretch itself even once in its life. Therefore, something that can only be seen on the ground throughout its life, so it ends up reaching its end while following the footprints left behind by others. Something that truly comes to an end. Truly. Was that and solely that not the problem?

Who would save that sort of life?

.....

Paimon left. Once a single woman left, the area became silent as if no one had come here in the first place.

Even after Paimon had left, Sitri glared at me for a long time. After glaring at me, she too eventually left. Although the last remaining woman had also left, this area was dark and still as if no one had ever left in the first place.

It happened late in the night.

**□ King's Beloved Slave, Berbere Witch Sisters, Captain of the
Royal Guard, Humbaba
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 14
Polles, Vistula Forest**

“Should we really be goofing around like this?”

“Weeell, it's a superior officer's order. It's our duty as peasants to do what we're told, even if it's to show our asses.”

“Whisper whisper.”

We witches were having a pleasant chat while enjoying a tea ceremony. Yeah. Well. What? It may be surprising, but even we have tea ceremonies sometimes. Although we usually don't.

Despite our appearances, we're cultured people. Ahah. Although it's a tea ceremony where we roll dice and the bitch who rolls the lowest number has to gulp down a mouthful of muddy water, it's natural for highly sophisticated groups to add some spice to their recreations. If anything, you can measure the level of a group's sophistication according to how stimulating their seasoning is. Tea ceremonies where you just drink tea with no added seasoning is actually considered to be fairly barbaric. In that regard, I can confidently say that we possess a considerable amount of refinement.

Yeah. Well. What? Do you have a problem?

“Pour! Drink!”

“There's not a lot of muddy water in this vicinity. Drink carefully. This is extra precious water. We went really far to get this just for you. There was a pool of muddy water with a lot of bugs in it and a pool of muddy water with not that many bugs in it, so I contemplated about which water I should bring back to you, but no matter how

much I looked at it, I felt that the water that was more full of life would be of higher quality. In order to prove that the muddy water's quality is good, I also scooped up the bugs that were living in it. Wow. Even when I think about it, I feel like I'm extremely sincere when it comes to my comrades."

"That's more damnably sincere than it is extremely sincere. To be more exact, you have quite the damned personality, but that's only if someone like you even has a personality."

"Whisper whisper."

If there were problems, then it was probably three things.

First, the fact that these bitches are crazy.

Since this is an issue that's no different to the usual, it's an irrationality that can't be fixed until the world comes to an end. Yup. The end. It can't be helped. My dear fellow witches. They were crazy since the moment they were born, so please look over this.

Second, the fact that our surroundings are rather arid.

The spring rain which had started in the north had now completely gone south. Although there was a swamp area if we went further ahead from here. Right now, we couldn't go there carelessly. Because of that sloppy bitch, Demon Lord Sitri's order, our forces were currently waiting in ambush.

Third, the fact that not only was our surroundings dark, but it was really dark as well.

It was night, but we were also in an aspen forest right now. Not a small forest, but one of those so-called sea of trees which covered the entire area. If you wished to go in a straight line from Bruno Plains to the Black Mountains, then this was the path which you had to take no matter what.

We were currently hiding at the tail end of that forest. We couldn't

even light our torches since we were waiting in ambush. It was so dark that these damn bitches couldn't even properly see the results of their own dice tosses. You could easily tell that this was the case because every time these bitches rolled their dice, they would keep reporting that they got the best result.

"Ah, I got double sixes again!"

"What a coincidence. I also got double sixes."

"Whisper whisper."

"Oh? To my knowledge, the chance of rolling double sixes is about 3 out of 100, so this is quite the astounding situation. For something that has roughly a 27 out of 1,000,000 chance of happening to have occurred here in this very spot."

"What are you talking about? Since she and I got double sixes, wouldn't the probability be around 9 out of 10,000?"

"Mhm. I'm saying that because I also rolled double sixes."

"It wouldn't be enough even if these bitches were to lose their wrists. They're bitches that'll somewhat be worthy of entering gambling dens only if they actually lose their heads. There's nothing surprising about this at all. They're crazy bitches after all."

In the end, because every single witch who joined the gamble had miraculously rolled double sixes, we all had to drink the muddy water. The sound of bugs being crushed and chewed on resonated throughout the darkness. How beautiful. Do you now understand why witches normally don't do insane things like having a tea ceremony?

Within the aspen forest where the fragrance of spring was reverberating and the odor of female beasts in heat was pungent. Only the spot where our master, Dantalian was located was being lit by candles. General Farnese was whispering to our master beside him.

“The exact size of the pursuing army…….”

“Mm. Since the enemy troops will also move while utilizing the darkness of night, detailing their military strength would be.”

Referentially, our master’s troops were completely alienated. It was Demon Lord Sitri’s dogmatism. Thanks to that, our seven thousand troops were all waiting here as a reserve.

Although our master all of sudden had his shoulder pierced, it seems he wasn’t that upset about it. He even went as far as to say that ‘if anything, being set as a reserve is fortunate for us’.

Yeah. Even I don’t want to go face to face with someone like the Imperial Princess of the Empire. People were capable of recognizing their peers and the fact that General Farnese was peculiarly obsessed about that Imperial Princess meant that she was a woman who was as insane as our general.

“Whisper whisper.”

“……By the waaay. Euryale. Why have you been chanting ‘whisper whisper’ into my ear since earlier? Have you gone crazy? No, you are crazy. Sorry. Let me ask that again. Have you gone more craaazy?”

“Master ordered us to whisper if we wanted to talk, didn’t he? I’m simply being loyal to our master’s orders like a dog.”

“Saying that you’re being as loyal as a dog doesn’t sufficiently explain the basis of your behavior. If you phrased it as being as loyal as a pup, then and then only would you be able to articulate your behavior.”

“Woof woof?”

“…….”

“Bark?”

Like I said, if there was a problem, then first off, it would be the fact that these bitches are crazy…… no, whatever. I'll stop. There isn't a single sane person underneath Master Dantalian's flag anyway. I'm saying this while including our master in that list. Despite my looks, I'm actually the sanest among the people here.

Yeah. Well. What? Do you have a problem?

It wasn't until a fair amount of time had passed after midnight that the sound of an explosion resonated. We had been leaning against each other and dozing off, so we got up in a panic. Should I say it was like a boom? Or should I say it was like a boom boom bang? In any case, we heard a tremendous boom.

“What?”

“What was that?”

“What happened?”

I believed that the fact that we're able to form a well-ordered harmony according to our own rules while even in a situation like this was an aesthetic that was unique to us Berbere Witch Sisters. There's a reason why I love these girls. Be it an explosion or something else, it was something to deal with after we have carried out our customs first.

“Whisper whisper.”

Are you still doing that? Just how many hours have passed since…… no, whatever. In any case, we turned our heads towards the direction of the forest where the sound of the explosion had come from.

The aspen trees were tall, so we could only barely see the night sky, but we could still see a red glow from the barely visible night sky.

Even if it appeared small due to the distance, it was clearly a burning glow. The glow didn't reach up towards the sky, but instead, it flicked its tongue below the sky. It's a fire. A large fire had undoubtedly occurred over there.

In no time at all, Master Dantalian put on his mantle and stood up.

“.....A fire attack, is it? I see they are using the oldest trick in the book.”

General Farnese stood up beside him.

“It is still effective. Indeed. Instead of charging through the forest head on, they intend to set it all on fire and invalidate any of our chances to ambush them.”

“Considering how they have created such an immense fire, they must have used all of their powder. Would the enemy forces' aerial mages not have to fly around while possessing no gunpowder pouches now? Why.....”

General Farnese shook her head slightly.

“Look, Your Lordship. Look at where we are.”

If you looked around.

We were in a sea of white aspen trees that reached far up into the sky.

“Since the battle is occurring underneath the trees, the mages have no way of discerning friends from foes while they are in the sky. Furthermore, is it not the middle of the night? The Imperial Princess is aiming for a confused scuffle. Not only will the mages be unable to carelessly drop their gunpowder pouches as they do not know who the enemies and allies are, they will also be unable to descend properly as the tree branches will stab at them. From this point forth, the magic-casting troops are no longer an Aerial Mage Force. They are simply mages.”

“.....”

Master’s breathing expanded close to the ground.

“.....Our forces’ effort of painstakingly placing our troops around in order to wait in ambush for the enemy was in vain, I see. Since this is a battlefield where gunpowder cannot be used, Elizabeth used up everything she had. Does she intend to turn this place into a raging inferno?”

Another explosion resounded in the distance.

Nevermind, it wasn’t just once. Wow. It was as if the very first explosion was merely a sample as a chain of explosions then resounded once, twice, thrice, four times, and several more times after that. The soldiers panicked and made a fuss as they lowered their bodies to the ground.

On the other side of the night sky, several branches of fire were already surging upwards. The pitch black sky, which didn’t have even a single visible glowing star in it, was now dyed in a dark amber shade.

Underneath that sky, the soldiers led by Demon Lord Sitri and Demon Lord Zepar were most likely cowering. It was an unrelenting bombardment. Even us witches who rated fire watching second to spectating fights didn’t feel that excited here. At this rate, I don’t know whether I might pee myself or not tonight.

--

—,!

As the sound of foliage shaking, the sound of branches burning, and the sound of beasts roaring like a pack of dogs mixed together——

the sound of a faint, hoarse voice. Eventually, the screams and shouts coming from soldiers as they clashed against one another started to rush towards us from a distance.

It approached.

—th...em!

And approached once more.

—Kill.....!

It approached again and again.

Even the sound of the foliage tilting because of the wind, even the sound of the branches gently proving their existences by crumbling, and even the sound of the beasts roaring like a pack of dogs while desperately trying to erase their own existences, they were all erased.

—kill them!

— Slaughter them!

— Kill the traitors.....!

As metal collided against metal and clashed ostentatiously, as lives struck lives and bellowed furiously, and as fire consumed fire and burned violently, the world became filled with only these sounds.

Mm.

Was this at the level of being screwed?

It probably wasn't. It, most likely, wasn't. Despite our looks, you know? For the past 300 years, we're things that have selected only the dirtiest of battlefields and rolled around in them.

We all turned our heads and looked at our master.

"Maaaster?"

"We aren't really giving Master this advice because we're possessors of Quadriphyllous medals and have gone through around three or four Crescent Alliances, but?"

"If you add decades on decades, go to war, and be gone to war against, then a thing called 'intuition' forms, you know?"

"Of course, even if we say it's our intuition, there may have been a lot of times where we were right, but we've also been wrong a similar number of times. Moreover, when we're wrong, I can't say that there has never been a time where we were so severely wrong that our bodies wailed bulkily?"

"If."

"That isn't taken care of soon."

I nodded. As the head witch who represents the Berbere Witch Sisters, as the captain in charge of the Royal Guards, and as one of the ten witches who possesses a Quadriphyllous medal.

"We'll probably encounter an incredibly fucked situation."

I advised our master.

While speaking in a tone that was faster than usual.

"This, is an action that was purposely carried out in order to dirty

the battlefield. There isn't only one or two dirty things about this either. First, the fact that our ambush has failed. Second, the fact that this is a night assault. Third, the fact that the terrain is a forest. Fourth, the fact that aerial battles are impossible. Fifth, the fact that even after creating this scuffle, the enemy general is brimming with the confidence that she can win this battle and is also leading the enemy troops while aware that her goal isn't some pipe dream. Master."

"Continue."

"We, the entirety of the Royal Guards, recommend the withdrawal of our forces."

I bowed my head and the other witches followed suit.

"Master, you possess a force with incredible air superiority known as your Royal Guards, but they're useless on this current battlefield. Whether it be Sitri or Zepar, Master, you must retreat and escape from the forest while our allies on the frontline are at the bottom of the swamp with the enemies. Although the place will most likely be slovenly, we'll at least be able to stand a chance if we set up a stronghold and reorganize our formation."

"The ones dying on the frontline are our allies, and the ones dying in flames are also our allies."

"If we abandon them now, then we'll be able to save them after half a day. If our allies flee, then won't they instinctively flee towards the backline? If Master establishes a stronghold at the back and raises your banner high, then wouldn't they run to us? This is the first advantage of the recommendation which the likes of us are suggesting."

The other witches opened their mouths one by one.

"The second advantage is the fact that by the time this happens, the enemy forces will have used up all of their gunpowder. On the other hand, we'll still be at our peak condition. Even if we're unable to

properly create a stronghold, the sky will be on our side. The night should have completely fallen by then, so in short, it'll be a world for witches. Yup. I was perfectly logical just now."

"The third advantage is the fact that Master's acting general will be able to engage the enemies on a familiar terrain. General, you've never experienced a true scuffle before, right? I'm talking about an actual mud fight. There's no skill involved, so no one knows how things will really end up. We can't fight in an obscured place. Let's retreat."

"Whisper whisper."

Euryale lifted her head up. This blue-haired girl, who was second to me in terms of combat experience, had been pressing her ear flat against the ground during our conversation.

"Sound. The sound of hoofs. There's a lot of hoofbeats..... A real lot. I don't know the direction. It's shaking the earth enough to reach here....."

"Shit."

Our situation was making me swear automatically.

"This one is adding another factor to why the battlefield is dirty. Six, the enemy troops most likely have a shit ton of cavalry units. If you think fighting cavalries on a plain is annoying, then fighting cavalries in a forest is fucking annoying. Who knows where they'll come out from."

"Thus, because of the six aforementioned problems, we recommend a retreat."

"And with the three aforementioned advantages, let's prepare for the next battle, Master."

Our master became silent.

The flames ignited more fiercely every passing minute while our master stayed quiet, and loud cries occasionally erupted even louder. In battle, time was momentary and an instant of continuity. If you aren't able to make appropriate decisions each time continuity approaches, then you'll lose your life.

Yes.

We believed that we gave an advice that befitted the group of mercenaries that was still alive after 300 years.

We probably aren't being conceited.

“.....”

Master Dantalian turned his gaze and stared at General Farnese. While we were picking up on the progress of the battle and reporting it as fast as possible, the acting general with blonde hair had been expressionlessly staring at the other side of the forest. This girl, no, this general was also a weird species.

The heat of the fire had yet to even reach our vicinity, but there were already several beads of sweat on the general's cheek. If I remember correctly, there was once a time where I had heard that the general had a constitution which would sweat more profusely the more the general was absorbed in her thoughts.

Our master spoke.

“Farnese. You are the one who handles my military affairs.”

“This young lady is aware, Your Lordship.”

“What do you wish to do?”

“The Imperial Princess of Habsburg must have come close.”

Hey, that kid just gave an irrelevant answer.

“The more chaotic battlefields are, the more afraid the soldiers will

be to step foot into them. If the current battlefield is a swamp, then no one would attempt to dive into it. Despite that, since flames have surged and the enemy troops have approached, there was undoubtedly a hero who had led the way by setting foot into the swamp before any of the enemy soldiers. This young lady is certain that that was the Imperial Princess."

General Farnese finally turned to look at our master.

"This young lady will go out and return after taking the life of the Imperial Princess."

This crazy bitch.

There were a lot of crazy people among the vassals who serve our master, but among those vassals, the Acting General was especially nuts. As you could tell by how he treats this especially mental child in a special manner, our master was also insane to a formidable degree. Because,

"All right. Do as you wish."

he said that and nodded.

All at once, we witches made an expression that appeared as if we had chewed on shit. If you're curious as to how we know what sort of expression one would make when they chew on shit, then.....Yeah. Well. What? Do you have a problem? What do you expect from people who have tea ceremonies with muddy water?

"It is not like the advice given by our Royal Guards is unreasonable either. It is worthy to be graded as a wise thing to do."

That means she thought of the wisest thing to do. How haughty.

"Therefore, Your Lordship, lead the infantrymen to the back and construct a stronghold. If there is a defeated ally, then Your Lordship will have to embrace them."

.....Whaaat?

“This young lady will take only the cavalry units in order to assault the Imperial Princess. Oh right. It is obvious, but Your Lordship’s Royal Guards will be going with this young lady.”

.....This crazy bitch?

“Since this young lady will return triumphantly before the break of dawn, Your Lordship, please prepare a delectable meal. Since a long time ago, have the commanders not said that wars are fought with the energy that comes from a meal?”

We all turned to look at our master.

With a gaze that begged him to please ignore this mental general. Desperately.

And then, our master smiled so benevolently that he appeared like a true saint.

“Have a safe trip.”

Eh?

What?

Whhhhy......

Eeeee......

Eeeeeek......

Nonono.

¶ Demon Lord of Honor, Rank 5th, Marbas
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 14
Polles, Near the Vistula Forest

“.....Your Highness. Should we not help them?”

The Demon Lords under my command gazed at me anxiously. We were in the vicinity of the Vistula Forest, the dark sea of trees. While placing a fair distance between us and the forest, we gazed at the pillars of flames that were surging up towards the night sky.

Barbatos and Paimon had chosen the worst course of action. They had ignored the advice we, the Neutral Faction, had given them and simply made a dash towards the Black Mountains. Without even a single word of apology or understanding..... now, we have no other choice but to oppose them.

In order to pursue the army of the Crescent Alliance when the moment arrives, I had gathered my troops and brought them close to the Crescent Alliance. However, there was no one who had expected the current situation. The Crusaders had chased after the Crescent Alliance and had bitten them by their tail, causing a battle to break out.

“Your Highness Marbas, your orders.”

The Demon Lords turned to me. They appeared as if they were urgently awaiting my command. It was unbearable. On one side, there was the Crescent Alliance that had betrayed our kind, and on the other side, there were the Crusaders who have always been the mortal enemies of our kind.....

It would be troubling if either side were to gain an advantage. Thus, we could not attack either side or assist them. A mud fight, is it? Do we have no other choice but to sit here and await the conclusion.....?

“We will not be taking part in this battle.”

“Lord Marbas!”

“This is a royal command. Be on standby until they have finished vying for supremacy. If there are stragglers escaping from the forest, then hunt them down and capture them regardless of whether they are from the Crescent Alliance or the Crusaders.”

Once the battle is over, both the Crescent Alliance and the Crusaders will be completely exhausted. If we rally our troops at that time and subjugate the two forces, it was uncertain as to whether we would be able to kill two birds with one stone or not. Regardless, that was a problem to be discussed after the battle was over. Right now, there was no other correct answer than to stand here and wait.

“But, how can we look on with folded arms while our fellow kind is dying……?”

“Did they not kill their fellow kind?”

“…….”

“I had given them a single day of leave of absence because of your pleas, but what did Barbatos and Paimon do with that day? They did not apologize. They did not even try to come to an understanding. They were busy ignoring us and carrying out their retreat. Do you still not understand?”

“…….”

“They are no longer our allies.”

The old moon of the Crescent Alliance had finally ended up breaking apart. I had busied myself for the past several hundred years in order to make the Plains and Mountain Factions reconcile, however, the moment the two had finally joined hands, we were the ones who ended up being ostracized. Was this a paradox, or was this a self-evident political consequence? How bitter…….

“Your Highness, over there.”

One of my men pointed towards the entrance of the forest. A single group of soldiers was making their way out of the forest while maintaining their ranks. They were escaping from that Hell. Although we could not tell who they were affiliated with, seeing as how they were retreating through the darkness while fluttering their banners, it seems they were not a rabble of common soldiers who had lost disgracefully.

“Mm. For the time being, we shall capture them.”

“.....Is it really all right? Allies. No, they could be a unit that was recently our ally.”

“It does not matter. I shall not order you twice.”

My subordinates obeyed my command and led our troops. Our war horses charged with light steps and instantly surrounded the target unit with ease.

The retreating unit, the affiliation of which was unknown, started to talk noisily once they saw us. They had approximately around a thousand troops. Even while they were retreating, they had managed to take a defensive stance with their spears and raised their weapons at us. It was a well-ordered retreat. Excellent.

I brought my horse to the front and approached them. Once they entered the range of our torches, I realized that they were an army of demons and not humans. They looked terrible. Putting aside the fact that they were covered in dirt, there were people who were scalded, covered in blood, and those who were being supported by their comrades because they had become crippled.....

It was clear that they had most likely survived a fierce battle. They also made a commotion once they realized that we were not humans either. They appeared to be confused as to what was happening. I cleared my throat and shouted.

“I am the Honorable Marbas! If there is a commander who is in charge of you all, then come forth and receive my questioning!”

The soldiers started to talk noisily.

Amongst them, there were even a few fellows who had started to carefully point at me and whisper to their comrades. It's true, I've seen him before from a far distance, it's really His Highness Marbas.....

Shortly after.

A monarch with a robust frame made his way through the soldiers and came forward. I immediately recognized the man's face. A man who appeared to be in the later part of his middle-age period and had a neatly trimmed white beard. The close aide who Barbatos referred to as 'my left atrium'. Rank 16th Demon Lord Zepar.

“This one shall meet the honorable monarch of the Crescent Alliance. Your Excellency Marbas, what brings a noble personage like Your Excellency to a place like this.....?”

Even Zepar appeared haggard as he had also gone through the same fierce battle as his soldiers had. The panic on his face the instant he saw me was evident. Zepar was a seasoned general, however, he most likely did not predict that he would encounter me here.

“Is your superior not retreating after having mistreated me? I was disappointed, so I had led my troops and followed Barbatos here. To think that I would helplessly chase the tail of a woman even at my age. I am quite pathetic.”

“.....”

“So what will it be? Will you fight your last battle against me for your superior? Or will you obediently surrender?”

Zepar knitted his brows before letting out a sigh.

“.....There is nothing more foolish than fighting against Your Excellency Marbas while carrying out a retreat. We shall surrender. Please bestow upon us your royal grace.”

“A wise decision. I shall treat you with respect as according to our customs.”

I ordered a servant to bring some alcohol for Zepar. Since he had just escaped from the battlefield that was running rampant with flames, he must be parched. Zepar politely bowed his head in order to show his respect and emptied the horn chalice in an instant.

“So, how is the progress of battle?”

“.....We were ambushed, so we did not have the time to survey the battle.”

Zepar answered in a subdued tone. How much was he allowed to say? What must be kept a secret? While carefully scratching around these boundaries, the surrendered general continued.

“We heard an explosion in the distance and it was not long after that that an explosion erupted right above the heads of my troops. Although there were only a small handful of people who were actually injured by the explosion, the disturbance was severe. The fire spread faster than we had expected, so we were unable to calm the disturbance. The enemy forces were most likely aiming for the confusion of our troops.”

“Are you the supreme commander?”

Zepar shook his head.

“No, this one is not. Sitri is the one who is holding that position.”

Surely.

If Zepar was Barbatos' hands and feet, then Sitri was Paimon's hands and feet. No, referring to her as simply hands and feet would

not be enough. The most trusted warrior and the concubine who was favored the most.....

The two Demon Lords had sent their own respective close aides in order to erase the trouble that was behind them. And they had failed. To be exact, they were currently in the process of failing.

“We tried to hastily unite with Sitri’s army, but we were forced to give up due to the intensity of the flames. Since my troops were lying in wait after having been split up into many smaller groups, we could not get in contact with Sitri who is commanding her own troops.”

There was a bitterness in Zepar’s voice. I nodded. When a general has to report about their defeat, then it was natural that a wretched feeling would penetrate deeply into their heart. Especially for generals who have fought earnestly and carried out their duties sincerely.

“Is this all of your troops? Since you have not lost your energy even while withdrawing, more than this should have survived. Where did the rest of your military strength run off to?”

Zepar did not answer. He simply looked this way and shook his head slightly. This meant that he was not going to tell me this bit of information. Since long ago, he has been a man with a right-minded will.

“How much military strength does the enemy troops have?”

“.....”

Zepar shut his mouth momentarily in response to my question.

“.....I am unsure.”

“You are unsure?”

“By nature, this is a battle that had broken out in a hurry. I was barely able to figure out which nations of the enemy forces are currently involved as their flags were only briefly illuminated by the

fire. Sardinia, Castile, Francia, Batavia……. By the looks of it, it seems that almost every human nation is working in unison in order to pursue our forces. It is a massive army.”

“.....”

“Most importantly…… the first ones who had charged at our forces were not the humans. It was our own kind.”

What was he saying?

I furrowed my brow.

“I do not understand. Explain.”

“.....I am referring to the common soldiers that belonged to the seven Demon Lords who were purged. Your Excellency, the humans had placed those common soldiers at their front and pushed their way into the forest.”

“.....”

Our surroundings were silent.

Before I knew it, the flames had reached the edge of the sea of trees and were burning everything to ashes. The trees snapped and groaned as they collapsed. The sound of the now homeless animals wailing in sorrow continued for a while before coming to a stop.

Zepar spoke slowly.

“The humans had used their prisoners as slave soldiers. There is no doubt that they had threatened them with spears and pushed them into the forest. Because of the sudden appearance of our own kind, we could not attack them properly.

Aah.

I lamented. Was that how it was? Was this the price for purging our fellow kind? Barbatos, Paimon, the two of you are receiving the

crimes, which the two of you had committed, in full.

“Zepar. I see that you have given me a false battle report.”

“.....”

“The enemy did not set their gunpowder ablaze first. I am certain that this happened later. The first thing the enemy had done was push the backs of our fellow kind and forced them into the depths of the forest. Then, while you all were lying in wait, you thought that the ones who were approaching were the enemy, so you had ambushed them. Your ambush did not fail. If anything, you had succeeded and **killed your own kind!**“.

“.....”

“A battle must have broken out. A commotion must have occurred. While you all were panicking due to the confusion, flames started to rain down from the sky. Do you still not understand? Due to the commotion you had caused while fighting and killing your own kind, you notified the enemy of your position. The humans heard the sound of your fighting and carried out their bombardments on those very spots. Am I wrong?! You, if you are going to answer, then do so!”

Zepar’s shoulders trembled.

The white aspen forest was vast. If the Crescent Alliance had spread their units out and made them lie in wait throughout the forest, then did the humans have something like Apollo’s eyes in order to have pinpointed those positions? Were they able to accurately pinpoint those positions and bombard only those spots out of pure luck?

No. Of course that was not the case. The humans originally did not know the ambush positions. Thus, they had first tossed the group of demons into the forest as slave soldiers.

Under the shroud of the night, Zepar and Sitri mistook our kind as the human armies and assaulted them. They ambushed them. They shot an endless barrage of bolts and killed them. They most likely

realized later on that the ones they had shot were our fellow kind, but it was already too late.....

Once the battle occurred, chaos followed after. Once the humans had grasped the locations of the ambush points, they sent out their aerial mages and dropped flames onto those spots without any hesitation. Explosions, booms, flames.....

“That.”

I gnashed my teeth in rage. I grabbed Zepar’s cheeks and turned his head. I forced him to stare at the Vistula Forest. A raging inferno was before us. A Hell that was scalding and burning our kind.

“That, is not a Hell that was made by the humans. You all. That is a hell which the Plains and Mountain Factions had made all by yourselves! Look at it! Can you not see straight?!”

“.....”

“Did you say that you were unsure as to how many soldiers the enemies had? That is obvious. Because the people you had ambushed and shot to death were not the enemy but our own kind! You pieces of trash that will be chased out of even the underworld due to Hades’ curse.....!”

I could no longer hold back my anger and pushed Zepar away. The horn chalice fell to the ground and rolled. Zepar only lowered his head and did not say anything in return. Does he have a sense of honor? Did he kill his own kind because he knows honor? Is that your petty honor? I spat.

“What was that, a purge? A purge to thin out the traitors? That is perfect. You did very well. Since it is now your turn to be thinned out, this is retributive justice. The Gods will take extra care of you all.”

“.....”

“Oi! Tie up this defeated general and load him onto the wagon.

Disarm the troops led by this man and treat them as prisoners. One day, I shall definitely ask Barbatos about what should be done about these men.”

The commanders dragged Zepar away. Even while he was being dragged, the surrendered general did not utter a word. Once their leader was captured, the rest of the soldiers knelt down and accepted their bindings without any sign of resistance.

I gazed at the Vistula Forest with my still burning heart. It felt as if the sound of our kind burning to death, the groans of our kind killing our own kind and the other way around was flowing out.

Aah. What else was this place other than a raging inferno? Barbatos, Paimon, you two have pushed demonkind into Hell……. Now with what face will you two repent with……?

□ Kinslayer, Imperial Princess of the Empire, Elizabeth von Habsburg

Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 14

Polles, Vistula Forest

The night had become completely dry. Similar to how a temperature somewhat remains in my heart even after a person has left, a heat lingered in the place where a fire had once burned. White ashes crumbled underneath my feet and the night rustled.

“.....This is quite the grand sight.”

The Grand Master of Teuton marveled. He trod through the clumps of ash and stood next to me.

“It was difficult for me to understand why Your Highness the Imperial Princess would go through the trouble of painstakingly dragging those dirty demons here, but..... Surely, now I understand. I now understand that when Your Highness had rescued the Crusaders during that previous battle, it was not by luck.”

“I am merely suppressing fire with fire.”

I gazed at the burning forest. Each passing second, the white aspen trees became darker as they burned, and once they had fully deteriorated, they snapped in half and died.

The Grand Master muttered while brushing some dirt off of his breastplate.

“If a scuffle had occurred within the forest just as the enemy forces wanted, then we would have been delayed. The enemy’s main army would have crossed the Black Mountains during that time, and our forces would have most likely run around like a dog chasing after a chicken. Instead of going along with their plan, we annihilate them

within a single night of fire bombardments, huh…….”

The Grand Master lamented. His tone sounded somewhat playful. The language of Teuton and Habsburg had the same root, but the tone and words were different.

“I see that the number of things which I must report when I return to His Majesty has increased. The fact that the heir to the Empire is a monster and that we must avoid facing her on a battlefield at all cost. Sheesh. I thought we would be able to relax after Margrave von Rosenberg had passed away, but an even larger wall has been placed at our border…….”

“You are resting for too long.”

I spoke coldly.

“The enemy soldiers are still resisting while having been spread out here and there. Even if the embers are small, they are still embers. Are you unaware that those embers are what grows into flames? We will not achieve victory by overwhelming the enemy with our military strength, but by simply subduing time itself and pushing ahead. In truth, our forces’ center is more feeble than expected. If you have the time to stand around and tell jokes, then take a banner and sortie.”

“……Despite my looks as an official, I have already carried out six charges tonight. Would it not be acceptable for this one to have a short moment of rest……?”

“You will be able to rest for all eternity once you are buried in your grave anyway. Do you wish to be buried?”

“No, absolutely not. Understood. As Your Highness commands. Haaa……. Shall I sortie with Sardinia’s banner this time……?”

The Grand Master saluted and departed.

How rash. He was a man who spat out a lot of noise.

The Grand Master of Teuton picked up the banner of a noble Sardinian household and disappeared into the darkness. A group of foreign soldiers followed their leader and vanished into the darkness as well. While watching that sight, I thought of the man who was hiding past that darkness.

“.....”

Dantalian.

You had used the busy niche of war and carried out a purge. Like this, you most likely intend to charge into your backline and unite the demon continent. After the demon continent has been unified, they will become so powerful and mighty that they will reign over humanity as an unprecedented evil. That was your groundwork and first move.

It was a terrifying move.

I had utilized your purge and detoxified my own army as well. You were so caught up in your own household business that you were unable to take advantage of the opportunity which appeared while I was cleaning my own home. Although the poison which you had spread using your acting general will infect every corner of the world, it will never be able to seep into my nation. I had used your head start and made it into my own. This was my groundwork and my response.

Dantalian.

You took advantage of the opportunity which had appeared while I was detoxifying my household and retreated within a single night. You must have clearly known that I was in a state which could not pursue you with ease. A purge should be an extremely difficult and strenuous task for you to perform, but you had simply abandoned the common soldiers who you were supposed to purge and passed that strenuous task onto me. You had grasped my advantage in reverse and used it to your advantage. That was your move with your knight piece and your response.

I had used the luggage which you had passed onto me, not as luggage, but as a sharp weapon. The soldiers who you had tried to purge were full of spite. Because they had nearly been killed by their own kind, their resentment was cold. You may have hidden ambush spots within the forest, but how did you feel when those ambush points had foolishly assaulted your own kind? Once more, I had changed your advantage into my own. This was my game changer.

Dantalian.

What will you do now?

Are we not in a relationship where we continue to respond to one another as we desperately turn this into a gamble? Have we not wagered our lives and deaths with one another? I believe that you will not dare to end this high and low here. The time to calmly set down your groundwork has passed. You and I are currently contending with our lives and deaths.

Will you run away? That is also good. That means I will be adding 1 win under my belt in my match against you. I will not refuse the opportunity to win by a wide margin, nor is it an excessively bad thing.

Dantalian.

Hurry and burn me. I cannot see your shadow even though I have set this forest on fire. Do I have to burn down this entire sea of trees in order to reveal where you are hiding? Must I truly go that far? I have come. Elizabeth Atanaxia Evatriae von Habsburg is here. Did you not promise me beauty? Have you already forgotten that hollow ground where that female and male dog mated? Was it a lie? Was it a joke? Was it a rash promise? Was it my greed? Was it another type of my avarice for having expected something from you? Have I overtaken you? Aah, still. Will you still not come? Do you intend to never come?

Dantalian.

Dantalian.

Dantali———.

“N-Now.”

“.....”

“We attacked them just as you had ordered, Imperial Princess of human descent. We had stepped into the perilous forest first and fought for your army. We have charged into their positions three times and taken down their positions twice.”

Noise.

I turned towards the noise indifferently. The noise was covered in black ashes and appeared like a clump of ash. The noise also had a maw which humans did not have.

It was unpleasant.

I gave it a single chance.

“Keep silent for a moment.”

“D-Did you not promise us? You promised us that if we followed your orders, then you would spare only our unit. Since your empire is extensive and lofty even among the humans, a promise made by you should also be just as heavy.”

I revealed that the opportunity which I had given it was a chance.

“I had ordered you to be silent.”

“If you back out of your promise now, then in what nation would we be able to live? Our fellow kind had abandoned us. We are subjects who have been thrown away. We had charged at those sons of bitches who had abandoned us because you gave us your word..... I cannot possibly ask you to look at us like your fellow humans. There are caves where beasts can return to and there are nests where

feathered creatures can rest. Even if we are not humans, are we beasts? Are we feathered creatures? Are we something below even beasts and feathered creatures? We wish to live. Please keep your promise, Imperial Princess of the Empire. No, are you not the very person who had promised this to us? Please give us permission. If you give us your permission, then we will leave and…….”

“Habsburg had granted their faith to you a single time.”

“What?”

“Trash.”

I glanced at a commander.

The commander pulled out his blade and struck down the noise.

“……, …….”

The chunk of flesh was penetrated momentarily. The momentarily penetrated chunk of flesh fell to the ground and could no longer get back up. It grabbed at its own neck.

“……Kuh, kack……! Huek……!”

Blood flowed down from the noise’s neck. The forest floor which had become a pile of ashes consumed the blood with ease. I wonder if it saw the sight of the ground of the world, which had given birth to it, consume its blood. The noise laughed while it groaned.

“……Kuh, ha… Ha, haha……. Ah…….”

The noise laughed for a long time. Although it was only briefly in my time, as it was a sound it was making as it died, it was surely a long laugh.

As if it had contracted malaria, the noise twisted its body several times. It was a laughter that was similar to a twisting convulsion. It had chosen to leave behind a ridiculing laugh as its final moment in

the world. In order to throw away and deny the world which had spat it out. Once, twice, thrice…… four times.

And it stopped.

I ordered.

“By any chance, if the demons we had pushed the backs of come back alive, then pretend to accept them before killing them all afterward. Do not hesitate. They are not **our kind**. They are pieces of trash which I do not need in my nation.

“Yes, Your Highness.”

I gripped the reign of my war horse and went further into the burning forest. The commanders of the Empire followed behind me. The imperial soldiers advanced while raising the banners of all nations.

It was late in the night, so we could not see deep into the forest. We could not see the enemy. The screams of the enemy were the only things to mix together with the flames as they surged upwards to the sky. Even though we could not see the enemy, since their screaming was distinct, we headed towards that direction without reserve.

— Kill the traitors!

— Kill them……!

Demons tore each other apart there. The sound of demons being torn apart and killed was chaotic and overflowing.

With that overflow, the things that were born on the earth simply made the earth which they were born on into a viscous swamp. Since there was no way out if you fell into it, and no way to survive if you

were set ablaze, this was a sea of fire. As no one could swim out or survive, it was also a grave.

Demon Lord. A sea of flames has been placed between us.

When will you come? Will you be able to reach here?

Even here?



**□ King's Beloved Slave, Berbere Witch Sisters, Captain of the
Royal Guard, Humbaba**

Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 14

Polles, Vistula Forest

“Shit! Fuck! Shit! Shiiiiiiit! No! I can't! I won't! I absolutely can't! I won't do it no matter what! Just kill me instead, you crazy bitch! Kill me! If you're going to commit suicide, then do it by yourself, Your Excellency Acting Generaaaaal! How do you expect to find a path in this forest?!”

“A witch's life is spent while avoiding being burned at the stake all their life. In the end, it's a witch's fate to be burned to death. At that point where life and fate intersect, resolution blooms and eventually sings……!”

“Instead of resolution blooming, I feel like bullshit is running rampant!”

Shit.

There's a reason why we're all desperately shouting. This, crazy bitch general, is currently forcing us to rush through the aspen forest as fast as possible. I'm not sure if you forgot, but it's night right now! Furthermore, it's a night where flames are scorching on all sides of the forest! We're speeding through a place like this while flying low on our brooms, so of course swear words would come out all on their own.

“Whisper……! Whisper……!”

No. You don't have to shout, Euryale.

What do you mean ‘whisper whisper’? That isn’t whispering anymore, is it? At this rate, we’re going to have to rip the word ‘whisper’ apart and redefine it. Has your heart taken a direct hit from the phrase ‘whisper whisper’ tonight? How? Why?

“Whoa, fuck!”

I urgently turned my broom and dodged a tree. Sheesh, hey. Sheesh.

I nearly died because I got so focused on Euryale’s antics for a second. I nearly collided with the aspen tree that had slipped through my view. Grouchy words emotionlessly flowed from directly behind me.

“.....Can you not fly a bit more carefully, Captain of the Royal Guards? If this young lady were to die, then there is no possible way for our allies to win this battle. Pay more attention.”

That’s right. It’s Acting General Farnese.

Of all things, this crazy fellow decided to ride behind me on my broom. It’s a personage that shows how much of a vital responsibility my low-altitude flying has. It’s quite the damn responsibility.

Currently, we Berbere Witch Sisters were leading the unit as the spearhead. General Farnese was also going with us. The cavalry unit was following right behind us. I’m not sure if they’re keeping up with us properly..... Ah, seriously. I should have smoked one more time before this.

General Farnese whispered into my ear.

“Captain. Go left. If we go right, then we will end up in Hell. Blow the horn and give the signal to the cavalry unit.”

“Ah, roger.”

I immediately raised the horn with my right hand and blew into it.

— Baaaah…….

I then turned my broom left.

The witches escorting us also turned the heads of their brooms and flew towards the left side of the forest. I see that they're doing a good job following us while avoiding the aspen trees. The sound of hoofs followed behind us.

“Right.”

When General Farnese orders this, I would blow a horn that sounded completely different to the one blown earlier.

“Further to the left.”

When General Farnese orders this, I would blow the first horn which I had blown earlier for a bit longer. Yes. This was all there was to the signal system which we had decided prior to the battle.

There were no flags. Hand signals were impossible as well. Due to the flames burning all around us, it was hard to open our watery eyes properly. Even if we tried to open our watery eyes, all we could see were aspen trees.

— Gooooh…….

— Baaaaah…….

Two horn sounds.

By relying on these two sounds alone, Master Dantalian's Royal

Guard and cavalry unit were speedily fervently through the forest. We also brought the horn that signaled the command to charge, but I have no idea when and how this was going to be used. Seriously.

“With what belief are you so confidently commanding us to go left and right?! We’re actually going somewhere right now, right? Yeah? Heey? Your Excellency Acting Generaaaal? I don’t really care where we’re going, but I’ll be grateful if there isn’t a gravesite there—!”

“Be quiet.”

General Farnese ordered in a subdued tone. Although her voice lacks emotions like usual, the difference is that it feels as if she’s really pissed off somewhere deep in her mind and it’s flowing out.

“Captain. Putting everything else aside, your mouth is too careless. Your voice is noisy. It doesn’t distinguish when it should and shouldn’t shut up. This is this young lady’s command, but right now is the time for you to be quiet. Do you understand?”

“Roooger. If you tell me to shut up, then I’ll shut up.”

“.....Haa.”

The Acting General then let out a breath.

It wasn’t a sigh. I could feel a hot sensation on my back coming from the general’s breathing as it seeped through my clothes. Since earlier, General Farnese has been continuously letting out a heated breath like a girl with a high fever. Each time General Farnese let out a breath, my back would gradually become soaked. Whoa, this sticky feeling.....

“Hoo, mm......”

Honestly, I’m already drenched. At this very moment, the entire body of the general who was latched onto me was as hot as a ball of fire. She’s really sweating nonstop.

Even if the forest around us was burning, we were flying at quite the speed. There's no reason to be sweating right now. Despite that, General Farnese was sweating so profusely that she had gotten even me drenched.

Fever of Wisdom.

It seems that the general behind me was arduously enduring the fever which Master Dantalian had named as such. I could occasionally feel her shoulders tremble in agony.

“Haa…… mm, haa…… hoo, uu…….”

……At this rate, who knows if we're going to end up with an unconscious girl.

In any case, we followed General Farnese's command and darted left and right through the forest.

The trees quickly zoomed in and out of our visions. Occasionally, we'd go by places where flames had yet to reach, places that have completely burned and become ashes, and places that were engulfed in flames. All of those sceneries quickly flew behind us.

“Your Excellency Acting General? Where should we go now?”

“…….”

Instead of a response, there was only breathing.

A sound of breathing that became hotter by the second.

The girl's breath was sticky like a swamp.

“Generaaal?”

“…….”

“Your Excellency?”

Once I turned around.

———The girl was closing her eyes.

□ King's Beloved Sword, Human, Laura De Farnese
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 14
Polles, Vistula Forest

—

Noise ran rampant in all directions. This young lady had no way of knowing where the noise ended and where sound began. The forest, the fire, trees and trees, shadows and shadows, all of these things quickly brushed past this young lady.

There was one thing that was clear. Sweat. On my neck, no, sweat flowed down this young lady's entire body. As this young lady's sweat was incredibly distinct, it was more vivid than this young lady's consciousness and soon felt more clear than this young lady's existence.

—!

This young lady was closing her eyes.

With her eyes closed, this young lady simply listened.

The things that were nothing yelled fiercely. They were things that were being burned. They were things that were screaming as their limbs had been severed. They were things that bellowed as they stabbed their blades into the limbs of those who were burning to death.

Similar to how it was natural for the forest to shake when the wind blows, the things that caught on fire naturally killed and were killed. This young lady, listened carefully to these nothings and tried to feel something out from there.

—,!

It was a difficult task. This young lady continued to sweat. It was more difficult to sweep in the noises that were spat out by other bodies than it was for this young lady's small body to spill out the sound that was within her body. It was really slightly, more difficult.

"....."

Therefore, this young lady listened a slight bit more carefully. The language of Sardinia. The language of Habsburg and the language of Francia. The language of Anatolia, the language of Castile, the language of Brittany, the language of Batavia, the language of Teuton, the language of Bernicia, the language of Moscow, the language of Kalmar, the sounds that have a nationality and are confined within borders—on this harsh land, this young lady attempted to listen to all of the sounds that billowed from this land where this young lady lived.

.....,

“Trash.” “Even if we think about it, we’re really like that.” “Every single last one of them.” “Kill them!” “You—.” “Kill them all! Charge!” The sound of fire burning. “Hold out longer! All units, if we back away even slightly here.” The sound of trees wailing as they break apart. “Charge! For the glory of Teuton!” “I am not a human! Spare me! I am not a human!” “All your.” “Whisper whisper.” “Run more. Run faster, you bastards!” “It’s complete hell!” The cry of a wolf. “All,” “This is our last remaining purgatory! Hold on!” “I can’t see anything.” “No, I am sorry, men. This is not it.” “We are on your side! We are not your enemy.” “It’s hot. Exceedingly so.” “Are things that.” “Defend our position at all costs!” “There is no place to go. Now.” “Yeah. This is the end of the road.” “I don’t know where this is.” The sound of hoofs. Even there. “No, me.” Even here. “Fight for the glory of the Kingdom of Sardinia! All right! Follow me!” “The traitors!” “I can’t see anything.” “We are not humans!” “Ask for forgiveness!” “Please spare me! I’ll surrender!” The sound of dead things being stepped on. “Charge!” “O Lord, I am sorry.” “Please.” “This can’t be. We shouldn’t have done this. From the beginning.” The sound of metal. “I don’t know where my eye went. Someone, please find my…….” “Do not deserve to live.” “Whisper whisper.” The sound of crumbling. “They told us to stay here.” “Die!” “Even though you’re trash, you’re good at sticking your mouth in places.” “Where, do we go?”

——This young lady was stifled.
Within the forest of sound.
This young lady, was stifled, but.

“Trash.” “Even if we think about it, we’re really like that.” “Every single last one of them.” “Kill them!” “You—.” “Kill them all! Charge!” The sound of fire burning. “Hold out longer! All units, if we back away even slightly here.” The sound of trees wailing as they break apart. “Charge! For the glory of Teuton!” “I am not a human! Spare me! I am not a human!” “All your.” “Whisper whisper.” “Run more. Run faster, you bastards!” “It’s complete hell!” The cry of a wolf. “All,” “This is our last remaining purgatory! Hold on!” “I can’t see anything.” “No, I am sorry, men. This is not it.” “We are on your side! We are not your enemy.” “It’s hot. Exceedingly so.” “Are things that.” “Defend our position at all costs!” “There is no place to go. Now.” “Yeah. This is the end of the road.” “I don’t know where this is.” The sound of hoofs. Even there. “No, me.” Even here. “Fight for the glory of the Kingdom of Sardinia! All right! Follow me!” “The traitors!” “I can’t see anything.” “We are not humans!” “Ask for forgiveness!” “Please spare me! I’ll surrender!” The sound of dead things being stepped on. “Charge!” “O Lord, I am sorry.” “Please.” “This can’t be. We shouldn’t have done this. From the beginning.” The sound of metal. “I don’t know where my eye went. Someone, please find my…….” “Do not deserve to live.” “Whisper whisper.” The sound of crumbling. “They told us to stay here.” “Die!” “Even though you’re trash, you’re good at sticking your mouth in places.” “Where, do we go?”

——This young lady closed her eyes further.
First, this young lady erased the miscellaneous sounds.
The sound of flames blazing. The sound of trees breaking. The
sound of metal.
The regretful cries of animals. The witches' mumblings.
This young lady first erased these all.
And.

“Kill them!” “You—.” “Kill them all! Charge!”

“Hold out longer! All units, if we back away even slightly here.”

“Charge! For the glory of Teuton!” “I am not a human! Spare me! I am not a human!” “All your.” “Run more. Run

faster, you bastards!” “It’s complete hell!” “All,”

“This is our last remaining purgatory! Hold on!” “I can’t see anything.” “No, I am sorry, men. This is not it.” “We are on your side!

We are not your enemy.” “It’s hot. Exceedingly so.” “Are things that.”

“Defend our position at all costs!” “There is no place to go. Now.”

“Yeah. This is the end of the road.” “I don’t know where this is.”

“No, me.”

“Fight for the glory of the Kingdom of Sardinia! All right! Follow me!” “The traitors!” “I

can’t see anything.” “We are not humans!” “Ask for forgiveness!”

“Please spare me! I’ll surrender!”

“Charge!” “O Lord, I am sorry.” “Please.” “This can’t be. We shouldn’t have done this. From the beginning.”

“I don’t know where my eye went. Someone, please find my…….” “Do not deserve to live.”

“They told us to stay here.” “Die!”

"——Go right."

This young lady pointed towards the sound of people shouting.

But not yet. This was still too far. If you tried to put your hand in the nirvana which appeared beautiful when looked at from afar, it was just a chaotic mire. We were far, from the place where Elizabeth Atanaxia Evatriae von Habsburg resided.

The language of demons cannot be heard in the place where the Imperial Princess resides.

Sweat flowed.

This young lady erased the sound of demons.

And.

“You—.” “Kill them all! Charge!”

“Charge! For the glory of Teuton!”

“All your.”

“Run more. Run

faster, you bastards!”

“All,”

“I can’t see

anything.” “No, I am sorry, men. This is not it.”

“It’s hot. Exceedingly so.” “Are things that.”

“There is no place to go. Now.”

“Yeah. This is the end of the road.”

“No, me.”

“Fight for the glory

of the Kingdom of Sardinia! All right! Follow me!”

“I

can’t see anything.”

“Ask for forgiveness!”

“Charge!” “O Lord, I am sorry.” “Please.”

“I don’t know where my eye went. Someone, please find
my…….” “Do not deserve to live.”

“They told us to stay here.”

"——Go left."

Those banners of all nations were a camouflage.

As this young lady understood the language of all nations, this young lady knew this.

That, was nothing more than a deceitful tactic that disguised their military strength to appear larger than what it seems to be by simply switching out their banners and carrying out multiple charges. The number of languages that could actually be heard, was only a small handful.

There was a direction where the language of multiple nations could be heard all at once. That was most likely where the mercenaries from multiple nations were fighting.

It was a boundlessly dangerous battlefield. As the witches had said earlier, this was a dirty battleground. There is no way that the Imperial Princess would appoint unfamiliar mercenaries as her guards in a place like that. The Elite Guards of Habsburg which the Imperial Princess had personally raised since long ago were most likely protecting her.

Sweat flowed.

This young lady erased the chaotic sound of mercenaries.

And.

“You—.”

“Charge! For the glory of Teuton!”

“All your.”

“All,”

“I can’t see

anything.” “No, I am sorry, men. This is not it.”

“It’s hot. Exceedingly so.” “Are things that.”

“No, me.”

“Fight for the glory
of the Kingdom of Sardinia! All right! Follow me!”

“Please.”

“Do not deserve to live.”

"——Go right."

Surely.

Now the words which this young lady could hear were distinct. As we approached closer and closer towards the direction of the sounds, the sounds regained the nations which they were born in and remained within their borders.

In this battle, the Imperial Princess could not mobilize a large number of soldiers. His Lordship's stratagem undoubtedly worked out properly.

At most, the only languages that could be heard were of Habsburg, Teuton, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth..... Coincidentally, these three nations all shared their borders with the Black Mountains. Did they intend to use this opportunity to make it so that it would be impossible for the Crescent Alliance to come back for a while? Was that their goal?

The language of Habsburg and Teuton shared the same root, so it was easy to confuse. Then all this young lady had to do was erase the Polish-Lithuanian shouting. Similar to how there was no way the Imperial Princess would leave her safety in the hands of mercenaries, there was absolutely no way she would have ordered the cavalry units of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to protect her life. Solely towards the sound of Habsburg.

Sweat flowed.

This young lady erased the sound of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

And.

“You—.”

“Charge! For the glory of Teuton!”

“All,”

“No, I am sorry, men. This is not it.”

“Are things that.”

“Fight for the glory
of the Kingdom of Sardinia! All right! Follow me!”

“Do not deserve to live.”

"——Go left."

"Roger!"

His Lordship's Captain of the Royal Guards answered with a playful tone and guided this young lady towards that direction. The sound of the horn resonated lengthily and left behind a lingering trace.

Occasionally, a single group of soldiers would appear and block our path, but since they were things that were not in a formation, we simply stepped over them.

The witches chatted with excitement. They flew freely between the aspen trees, speeded through the low-altitude night sky on the ground of the forest, and shouted as they shot down humans with their crossbows.

"Wait a second."

"Doesn't this, sort of."

"Feel like we're getting somewhere right now—?"

"Doesn't it feel like we're gradually breaking through them more?"

"Really? Wait, we're breaking through this? Didn't the enemy forces, have like, at the very least, five or seven thousand soldiers? You're saying that we're breaking through this right now?"

"Wait a second, we're this far in, but why are there so few troops here? Where are the enemies hiding? Eh? What, is this? Seriously, what's up with this?! I'm just seeing things, right? I have a weird hunch right now."

Sweat flowed.

This young lady finally erased the sound of Teuton.

And.

“You—.”

“All,”

“Are things that.”

“Do not deserve to live.”

"——Go left. Very slightly."

"Fuck, if we live through this, then it really won't make any fucking sense. Ah, fuck. Shit. Seriously? This doesn't seem like an illusion."

"No. We still don't know yet. In war, nothing is certain until the end. If the enemy's reserve troops suddenly appear in front of us with a bang, then we'll be taking a luxury liner straight to Hades."

"No. I have a good feeling. My instincts have never been wrong before, so you can trust me. It's an objective truth that's as believable as the fact that you're all perverts. Whoa, I was perfectly....."

"You've been illogical from beginning to end, you crazy bitch! Since we're still in the middle of a battle, if you're going to pointlessly flap your lips, then just shoot your crossbow more! You bitch who has noodles for brains! I've already killed seven!"

"Pfft, only seven? Are you saying that as if that's some exploit? I've shot down at least fifteen people now, girl."

"I'm not trying to brag or anything, but I attached a spearhead to the end of my broom, so I've just been bashing it into people. In other words, a ramming tactic. I've killed about three people like this, and the number of people I've shot down with my crossbow is about twenty, so my exploits are roughly at thirty."

Sweat flowed.

This young lady had no more sounds to erase.

And.

You.

All,

Are things that.

Do not deserve to live.

"——Go straight."

"Huh?!"

"This doesn't seem right! This, is real! I'm not seeing things!"

"Shit, we're seriously breaking through? This is seriously being broken throoooough?!"

"Whisper whisper."

"Whisper whisper?"

"Whisper whisper!"

"What is this fucked up situation where our Euryale has suddenly increased to three people?!"

"They're just the girls who're at a lost for words but wanted to continue the harmony, so they imitated the bitch with the easiest line to copy. Now you have no other choice but to acknowledge the fact that I'm perfectly logical, right, you fucking bitch?"

"No, this isn't the time for that nonsense! The horn to charge! I didn't think we'd actually use this! Your Excellency Acting General? Your Excellence? Hey, you crazy general! They're right in front of our noses! They'll be in front of us soon! That, it's vague because of the darkness, but that's the banner of those Habsburg bastards! The two-headed eagle!"

"It's the leader's military flag! I saw it! I caught a glimpse of it just now! Over there!"

And......

And.....

And.

This young lady opened her eyes.

You all are things that do not deserve to live.

——Found you.

"You all, are things that do not deserve to live."

"——Elizabeth Atanaxia Evatriae von Habsburg."

"——Laura De Farnese!"

"Witches! Witches have appeared!"

"The Three Nightmares! It's the Berbere Sisters!"

"Why. No, how did they get here——."

"It's an ambush!"

"It's the Devil of Bruno! The Devil of Bruno is invading!"

"Do not panic! Spearmen, forward! Protect the crossbowmen!"

"Crossbowmen, quickly go to the backline and form a line. Hurry!"

"Yes, Your Highness!"

"Spearmen forward!"

"Crossbowmen retreat to the back and group up!"

"How dare the daughter of a harlot assault the Empire……!"

"Hurry up and call the other units here! This is urgent!"

"But Your Highness, there are still enemy forces in the forest that are resisting……!"

"We must run away! Your Highness! We cannot send out our aerial mages! Because they had cast their explosion magic on the forest, our gunpowder supply has long since been depleted! We have no way of blocking the witches!"

"Make the crossbowmen fire as they slowly retreat. Do not panic. Aim for as long as possible and fire. Do not panic! The moment you all panic is the moment we are defeated!"

"It's the enemy general! That blonde-haired girl is the enemy general!"

"Crossbowmen. Fire! Fire!"

"Heed this young lady's words!"

"Roooooger!"

"Today, we shall resonate the end of life on this dark night! I, Laura De Farnese, shall be the one to personally command you all! During the moment you all accelerate and charge at full speed, and even during the moment you all are looking forward after having penetrated the body of an enemy, you all shall witness this young lady at the forefront with her blade raised high! This young lady shall be together with you all in this moment! On this day, if you all are to die here, then you shall do so after this young lady! Our military strength is completely inferior. Therefore, now is the perfect moment to charge at the enemy's ringleader!"

"Fuck, shit. I really have no idea now!"

"All soldiers, charge! Blow the horn of Yotvingians!"

"Order to charge! All soldiers, chaaaarge—!"

"Crossbow wielders, fire! Horns! Left-wing, charge! Right-wing as well!"

"That bitch with the pointlessly shiny silver hair is the Imperial Princess of the Empire!"

"Prepare to ram! Prepare to ram! We'll be the ones to strike at those Habsburg pieces of trash first! Euryale! Take your messed-up bunch and fly to the sky! Bombard them from above!"

"Yes. Understood."

"Euryale spoke! She finally spoke!"

"She's always been able to speak well, you crazy bitch!"



"Fuck, the Acting General got hit by an arrow!"

"Heal her! Pour a crap ton of magic and heal her!"

"You crazy bitches, you girls continue your bombing! Don't come down, don't come down! We'll handle things down here!"

"——This young lady is completely fine. If anything, the hole in this young lady's thigh is rather refreshing. We do not have the time to be doing something like this. We must end this all before the enemy reinforcements can arrive! All soldiers, be prepared for harm and charge! Sweep them away! Do not stop!"

"This kid is really fucked up even while she's crying tears!"

"Kill them! Set them on fire! Massacre them! Avenge our compatriots! There is only a single command which this young lady has given you all——slaughter! Slaughter them and slaughter them some more! End all of their lives and put an end to this!"

"Yeah. If you complain about a little flesh wound, then you wouldn't be a witch. At the very least, that'd just be a rookie whom you can't even call a witch."

"Now I feel like taking orders! If the person giving orders doesn't have any blood on them and is just flapping their lips, then I automatically want to hit them on the back of their head."

"Uhm, but the general isn't a witch……."

"We, the Berbere Witches, now acknowledge you, General, as an honorable wiiitch! Ahahahah! You imperial bastards, look at their dumb faces! This is why I can't stop going to war! Because I want to keep seeing things like this!"

"Shot! Her Highness has been shot!"

"Mage unit! Where's our mage unit?!"

"Elite Guards, protect Her Highness! This is not the time to be holding your blade!"

"Damn it. The bolt was coated in poison. Those damn witches……. Fortunately, it only grazed Your Highness' hand. If we do not treat it quickly, then the poison will spread throughout the body."

"You bastard, are you telling us to lay our hands on Her Highness' royal body?!"

"We do not have enough time to neutralize it! It is the witches' poison! A decision must be quickly——."

"———!"

"Your Highness?!"

"Dear Lord. How could Your Highness do that to your own royal body……."

"Right now, is something like my finger that important? What do you intend to do by calling all of the elite guards here?

Immediately secure a wider ground! If we can hold out longer, then we will live, but if we were to collapse here, then we will die!"

"Contact with the other units……. Your Highness, this one apologizes, but because the entire forest has been set ablaze, we cannot assemble the other units. At this moment, even if we have to swallow down our tears, we must retreat. We can turn today's disgrace into tomorrow's glory."

"Please withdraw, Your Highness!"

"We commanders will hold them off here."



"Dantalian. Aah, Dantalian. O Demon Lord of Peasants. Have you turned that broken thing, were you finally able to turn that broken thing into a human? Was even that capable of becoming a human? Was that something which was possible? Is your world a place where you pick up those broken things, fix them, and spread them out? Even if you spread them out, would that be a world?"

"Your Highness!"

"....."

"Quickly, Your Highness' decision."

"——Retreat. I command you all. Stall for time as I withdraw. Devote your lives to me. I shall live a lifetime with your seconds and minutes. From this day forth, as my life is simply an extension which has been added due to you all, know this and be laid to rest. I too shall live while aware of this."

"As you command."

"For the glory of Habsburg."

"It seems that I was careless. A single step. Because we lacked a single step, we were unable to catch the Crescent Alliance by their tail. The opportunity to capture both Demon Lord Barbatos and Paimon and display their heads in the Imperial city, has this slipped between my fingers? How regretful. How pathetic. It is all because of my incompetence and lack of virtue. I was careless because I had treated the enemy general as a doll."

"Your Highness."

"Laura De Farnese."

“Ah—. Wait a second. I feel like they’re about to retreat…….”

“Eh. They put up this much of a fight, but now they’re running away with their tails between their legs? As a witch, that doesn’t really seem right…….”

“Raise your hand if you want to keep fighting.”

“Sorry. My right hand was cut off.”

“I got hit in the shoulder by a bolt, so that’s a bit.”

“I’m not particularly injured anywhere, but my back strangely hurts.”

“Fuck. I laughed because the enemy troops looked fucked up, but now that I look at it, my dear sisters have also abruptly become fucked up as well. Even if it was a late night bombing, what’s up with your conditions? Carelessly getting hit by arrows and becoming half-dead. And you girls call yourselves the elites of the unit which possesses Quadriphyllous medals—?”

“Even if we hear that from the girl who hasn’t died for over 300 years…….”

“Leader Humbaba just has some seriously good luck, yup.”

“Luck is also a type of skill. Albeit, I believe I’ve taken a couple of steps up the stairs of adulthood for having said a line like this. What should we do? Your Excellency Acting General, if you tell us to pursue them, then it’s not like we can’t.”

“Pursue them. Pursue them, but do not push after them to the point of dying. Our wounds are deep as well. Do not become intoxicated by the chance of victory and bear in mind the fact that we have no more than a thousand troops. Just focus on finishing off the rest of the commanders that were abandoned here. They are most likely generals whom the Imperial Princess had raised with care. If you take their lives, then the Empire will receive quite the blow.”

"The enemy general is not the devil or a monster. She is the same human as you all! Do not be afraid and fight back! You bastards, are you not ashamed for having been born as the sons of Habsburg? Do you intend to be afraid of some country-bumpkin from Sardinia and die here? Instead of dying in shame, do so proudly!"

"....."

"Not yet. We can still endure. The other units nearby are rushing here to support us! Hold out, men! If you hold out now, then you will be able to return to the homes which you all have been longing for! We will die if we split up! We will die if we break apart!"

".....Her Highness the Imperial Princess has....."

"I saw her get hit by a bolt earlier....."

"No. I saw her retreating with the other commanders. I couldn't see well because it was dark, but Her Highness is the only one who could possess such beautiful silver hair."

"Roger roger. As you command—."

"Then shall we hunt down the pathetic remnants and make them more pitiful? Sorry, but we're actually amazing at things like this."

"Ah. It's not fun now that they're running away……. It's like finding out in the middle of intercourse that your partner was never wet……. I want to smoke. I want to die……."

"That's a weird thing to say. If you really did want to commit suicide whenever you realized that, then you would have had to commit suicide every single time you had sex."

"What did this bitch say?"

"Whatever. This is over. We've won this battle."

"Yup."

"At this very moment, there's no way that the tables could be turned."

"First, the enemy troops may be unfaltering elites among elites, but their morale and courage rely heavily on their single leader. Since their leader has run away, their morale will quickly plummet and their courage will soon collapse. The only thing that will come to the spot where their morale and courage have vanished, is the fear of death."

"Until now, they probably managed to focus on the fight in front of them because they were either chased by the panic that came from the hurried situation or because the Imperial Princess' urgent situation handling and hasty orders had been kicking them on the rears."

"Similar to how we want to commit suicide whenever our drugs wear out."

"Because of that very reason, they'll become engulfed in fear that quickly."

"When will the reinforcements....."

"We'd be better off making a retreat after having been torn apart! Some of us may get our asses caught by the witches and die, but wouldn't the rest of us survive? Instead of waiting for backup from foreign nations, which may or may not even come, it would be wiser to just save our own lives!"

"Her Highness the Imperial Princess had..... us."

"That is not so. We are protecting Her Highness."

"This officer shall attempt to cut through the enemy's ranks. May the blessing of war be with me."

".....Mother....."

"Second, it's really simple, but the fact that we've already killed all of the remaining enemy aerial mages. Now there's no need for us to descend arduously. All we have to do is just drop the gunpowder pouches from the sky and set them on fire."

"If the enemy forces maneuvered as fast as they did earlier, then we would have been forced to continuously descend, but—."

"From this point on, the enemy's focus is on stalling for time. Since they have to endure in order to prevent us from chasing after the Imperial Princess, their movement would be restricted, right? In our case, we have no reason to push ourselves like that. Ahahah."

"Third, the fact that we're now the ones in control of the fire assault. From now on, the sea of trees isn't the enemy's territory, but ours. Since the enemy has lost all of their aerial mages, they have no way of surveying from above."

"Whisper whisper."

"Yup, and whisper whisper."

"What's that supposed to mean? They can't survey from above, so it's whisper whisper? You sure you haven't gone completely insane because there's no way to purify your head? Would you like it if I referred to you as a rat in poison?"

"I don't hear hoofbeats anymore..... They're leaving the forest."

"Ahah, all right. We immediately have another reason now. Fourth, the proof that our allies, who have been sitting and taking a shit this entire time, have finally started to push the enemy back! Time is on our side."

“.....it’s hot.”

“.....water......”

“.....”

"Except one thing, we can't really do much with this measly number of a thousand troops."

"It'd be difficult for us to chase after them and take them out, and it'll also be difficult for us to annihilate them all here."

"Second, although we can continue fighting, our cavalry unit has become quite exhausted because they had to keep up with us. It'd be greedy of us to want them to not be exhausted after having gone through a forest while it was burning on all sides. We have no reserve troops."

"Third, we're just genuinely worried about our maaaster."

"Thus, because of the four aforementioned advantages, we recommend the continuation of battle."

"And because of the three aforementioned disadvantages, we also recommend a retreat. Master's Acting General."

"Your Excellency Acting General may be disappointed that you were unable to capture the Imperial Princess, but that was Your Excellency's goal alone. We have already sufficiently achieved our original goal of putting our pursuers at a deadlock. Any more than this, would simply be excessive greed. It's a bummer that the bolt which I had shot barely missed, but, well, it can't be helped. Your Excellency was also fortunate to only get a hole in your thigh."

"This young lady understands well that you girls wish to hurriedly return to His Lordship and brag about your exploits today. This young lady is tearing up not only because of the hole in her thigh. How could His Lordship have appointed you girls as his Royal Guards and make this young lady shed tears? As expected, His Lordship is undoubtedly an eternal tyrant."

"We can't deny that. So, what are we going to do? Fight? Retreat?"

“—We are returning.”

This young lady ordered.

The remnants of Habsburg had taken flight, so they were already a fair distance away from our forces now. It goes without saying that both the witches and cavalry units were incredibly tired. Although we wished to sweep through them more, we did not have the surplus strength to do so. It was quite regrettable. We had missed our golden opportunity.

"Okay. We also believe that that is the wisest decision. Troops that confuse goals with exploits in battle are destined to not last long. Let's withdraw with leisure."

"Wow. Who here saw the Imperial Princess of the Empire's glare when she got grazed by that poison bolt? I bet she's raising a hundred venomous snakes in her stomach. She looked like she had quite the sharp temper, seriously."

"We could have killed her, but it's because you girls didn't listen to my orders. Why didn't you fire when I told you to fire, but fired whenever you felt like it? Is it that? Are you girls in your rebellious period? Are you girls going through puberty again for the first time in 50 years?"

Murmur murmur.

Similar to the way this young lady had come here, this young lady borrowed the back seat of the Captain's broom. A terrible pain spread throughout this young lady's thigh whenever the broom moved slowly, but this young lady stared at the sky indifferently.

As it had happened late in the night.

This young lady had triumphed.

"....."

The sun was rising in the distance.

What remained in the distance were the burnt remnants of the forest. The sun also shined down on the areas which had been burned. While watching the sight of the sunlight seep into the mounds of ash, this young lady let out an inadvertent 'ah'.

If you picked up the pile of ashes, it would be a mere handful. If the sun did not shine and the world was dark, then the pile of ashes would be nothing more than an impurity that made people choke and tear up if breathed in.

Things that remained after having been burned. At most, it was nothing more than a legacy of something which had once lived.

If the afternoon sun shined down upon them, then even those would shine radiantly. Are you a corpse or are you a doll? The Imperial Princess had asked this young lady this question. However, it did not matter whether this young lady was a corpse or a doll, rather, it did not even matter if this young lady was a pile of ashes that no longer had anything to burn.

If I have His Lordship.

If His Lordship calls my name.

If His Lordship will listen to my voice.

This young lady did not know what to call this. Was this an emotion? Was this not too excessively serene to be referred to as an emotion? Was this perhaps rationality, then? Was this not too excessively smooth to be referred to as rationality?

This young lady contemplated.

This young lady contemplated deeply.

And decided to refer to this, which did not have a name yet, as love.

Translator's Notes

1. [↑↑](#) Night Parade of One Hundred Demons, also known as [Hyakki Yagyō](#).

Chapter Four

Hope

“This young lady loves you, Your Lordship.”

“Yes. I see that your bullshit is bitter. Just go to sleep.”

It seems Farnese had gone insane for some unknown reason as she had abruptly confessed her love to me, but I had kindly turned her down in less than 3 seconds. This girl has always been crazy, so her confessing to me was not even slightly bewildering.

Farnese expressionlessly contemplated.

“.....How strange. What is the issue? Humble as this young lady is, this young lady’s beauty is quite exceptional. If this young lady were to speak closer to the truth, then this young lady has yet to meet a woman who is more beautiful than this young lady. Is Your Lordship truly a eunuch?”

“Oh? Is it because you have just returned from playing with fire? You’re spouting nonsense with that mouth of yours.”

“.....This young lady loves you? I love you, Your Lordship? This young lady believes that she loves you, Your Lordship. I adore you. I cherish you? I am loving you? This young lady truly loves you. This young lady devotes her time to you, Your Lordship. This young lady’s sun. This young lady’s midday. This young lady’s light and melody. The sunlight that shines down upon the clumps of ash.”

“Now you are spouting bullshit.”

“This young lady wishes. This young lady hopes. This young lady desires. This young lady wants Your Lordship to turn this young lady’s time into a melody. Your Lordship.....? Oho. I see. Ehem. Was that the problem?”

What did she realize?

Farnese looked at me confidently.

“This young lady loves you, father.”

“.....”

I hit Farnese by the back of her head.

What she referred to me as was not the issue here. My daughter who is sick at heart. This lunatic child.

“Who’s this? Who could this beee?”

Additionally, the witches had all returned with their lives intact and they were now in the middle of bullying Ivar Lodbrok. Ivar Lodbrok was sitting motionlessly in our camp, so they were skipping around him and speling amongst themselves.

“No matter how I look at it, it appears that there’s a familiar bat here. As his mug is a bat and his physiognomy is a bat, there’s no doubt that this is seriously a bat-like bastard. The fellow who made me believe that, throughout my entire life, I would never be able to meet a person who’s more bat-like than him, seems to be right before my eyes—?”

“Strange, how strange. From what we can remember, this is definitely a fucking bastard, but why is a fucking bastard residing in our master’s military camp? Has our master finally decided to take in even fucking bastards? Aha aha, as days go by, our master’s royal grace is becoming more ravenous.”

“.....”

Ivar Lodbrok stayed seated and merely kept his mouth shut, not giving the witches any sort of response. However, if I were his lawyer, then once more, I would have advised against pleading the Fifth here. To the witches, the opposition’s response did not matter to them by even the smallest, littlest, or tiniest amount after all. Look. Are the witches not happily performing a circle dance around Ivar while

holding each other's hands now?

"We thought—."

"Thought and thought again—."

"Thought like a person who had nothing to do except think about that—."

"The fact that our master was confined in a cell for a week."

"Aah, that fact means our master was unable to wash for an entire week."

"Aah, that fact means our master was unable to fap for an entire week——."

"Ah, such grief. La-di-da, such grief."

"We thought."

"Since ancient times, if a male skips a day of fapping, then it's both joyous and sorrowful."

"Thought and thought again."

"If they skip two days, then it's a tragedy. If they skip three days, then it's an atrocity."

"Thought like a person who had nothing to do except think about that."

"Aah, alas, such grief. Our poor master, our master who was unable to fap for an entire week. As your faithful subjects, there's no way that we wouldn't sing a song about it."

"Ah, such grief. La-di-da, such grief."

"We thought."

“About Master’s long period of no fapping?”

“Thought and thought again.”

“About Master’s pitiful no fapping!”

“Thought like a person who had nothing to do except think about that.”

“Ah, such grief. La-di-da, such grief.”

“Look at those dwarves with small maws, look at those wolf bastards with long maws, look at those sons of horses with long and pointed mugs, and look at those pigs with plump stomachs. Ah, everyone come close and look at the blood-sucking old man over there. We’ll sing a single plaintive melody, so listen.”

“.....”

In the end, those crazy girls started to sing in unison.

An old man asked

Which Demon Lord has the largest penis in the world

We answered

The person’s name is Dantalian with a sorrowful penis

The old man inquired

How impressive must it be for you all to praise it so

We replied

It is a penis that shoots faster than the wind

It is a penis the hair of which is denser than a forest

While it is a penis that is hotter than fire

It is a penis that is more steadfast than a mountain

But what is the point

Since there was no place it could be used for over a week

That is clearly the most pitiable penis in the world

Thus, we sing like this

The person's name is Dantalian with a sorrowful penis

Dantalian with the saddest penis in the world

“.....”

I went silent.

“.....”

Ivar Lodbrok went silent as well.

“Ah. Referentially, this young lady was the one who had composed this song, Your Lordship. Since this young lady's genius, which resonates throughout the world, has gone into this, you can be moved and cry as much as you desire. Even this young lady must admit that quite the good chord has gone into this.”

The lunatic did not go silent.

Eventually, Humbaba, the leader of the witches and the Captain of the Royal Guard, spread both of her arms out wide.

“Dantalian with the saddest penis in the woooooorld—.”

It wasn't until she had sung this line passionately that the madness

had reached its zenith and then subsided.

It seems that the witches were most likely under the illusion that they were actresses in a cheap opera right now. It was an incredibly eccentric scene, but at the same time, it was not eccentric at all. If you considered the fact that their brains are usually in the state of being steamed by drugs, then this was not strange at all.

“See? I said that I made a super great song, didn’t I? Ahahah. How was it, my beloved fellow witches? Do you girls now admit that I do indeed possess quite the amazing artistic talent?”

“I admit it.”

“I concede.”

“It’s something that I must admit.”

“It’s also something that I can’t not admit.”

“Sorry, Master! We were originally going to come back to your side a little sooner, but listen to this. There were human prisoners loitering about waaay over there, you know? Ehem, aha, ehem ehem, as experts of both torture and execution, it’s not like we couldn’t bestow upon them our kindness.”

“Well, executions nowadays aren’t able to vivify the feeling of the past no matter what they do. Compared to the past, the world has become quite weak.”

“That’s right. Back in my day, when they cut your flesh, they didn’t cut it normally. If anything, you’d be thankful if all they did was cut your flesh. They used to tear off all of your skin, pour a potion on top of your bare flesh, healing you completely, before tearing it off again. I was able to endure that twice, but it started to get difficult after the second time.”

“Eh, only two times? Are you saying that as if that’s some sort of experience? I’m able to stay sane for at least the first 5 times, girly.”

“I’m not trying to brag, but I didn’t lose my senses even when my internal organs had been cut into pieces and my flesh had been peeled off thirty times. On the contrary, my mind became clearer each time my flesh was ripped off, so it felt as if something like torture could not possibly invade my prestigious mind.”

“I wonder about that. Instead of saying that you didn’t lose your senses, I feel like that just means you were never sane since the moment of your birth.”

What the hell are these girls talking about?

I had a faint headache.

If a person possessed a mouth, then they should be making sounds, but these girls were babbling while only letting out noises. Therefore, I was certain that the things which these girls possessed were not mouths, but assholes.

“You all may not know this, but I’m a witch who had her blood sucked by a vampiric archduke back when I was really popular. It’s a bit embarrassing to say in front of you girls, but in truth, my lineage is so great that I actually shouldn’t be hanging around with girls like you.”

“Rather than words being said to our faces, those sound like words you’re saying to our butts.”

“I smell a fart coming from somewhere. Did someone fart?”

“It wasn’t me.”

“It wasn’t me either.”

“Why are you looking at me? It absolutely wasn’t me either. You can easily tell just by looking at my innocent face that my butt isn’t a butt that would fart.”

“It’s more suspicious because you’re denying it that much. The

thought that it's undoubtedly you since you're denying it like this comes to mind. Ah. I was perfectly logical just now."

"You're suspicious for suspecting me so much. I don't know if you're perfectly logical or not, but I know for certain that you're a perfectly crazy bitch."

"Judge, please enter."

"Now then, now then. From what I can tell, this is quite the foul incident. Just from its scent, you can tell that this flatulence doesn't have the normal kind of foul stench."

"What is the verdict, then, Your Honor Humbaba? The people are currently rioting outside of the court of law. Please remember that it was the people who had appointed you as the city's judge."

"The political judge who accommodates witches should step down!"

"Step down! Step down! Step down!"

"Ehei, ehem. Sheesh, this is troubling. Calm down, you lot. If it wasn't you, me, or any one of us, then I'm certain that the one behind this flatulence incident is none other than our master."

"What was that?"

"This is an unexpected conclusion."

"Do you have evidence? Evidence?"

"The smell of the flatulence itself proves who its owner is. The reason why the smell of this flatulence is so foul is due to the fact that our master had held it in throughout the entire week he was imprisoned and had just now let it loose."

"That's nonsense!"

"Were those words just now or was that a fart? The judge is the one farting right now!"

“Booooo! Witch trial! Let’s do a witch trial!”

“Whoa there. Ehem. If you perhaps object to this verdict, then this judge will have no other choice but to suspect that one of your adorable butts was the one to have committed this crime…….”

“A flawless verdict.”

“Acknowledged.”

“As expected of Captain Humbaba. That was a beautiful verdict.”

“……For Lord Dantalian to have been the culprit behind the fart……. This is all my fault. If I had known sooner, if I had realized a little sooner…….”

“No, Euryale. It isn’t only your fault. Our apathy towards His Highness Dantalian’s butt is what had brought upon this tragedy.”

“Big sis…….”

“My son!”

“Damn it, this is touching. It’s been over 50 years since I was appointed as a judge, but this is the first time I’ve witnessed such a sorrowful scene. It’s impossible for this judge to not shed tears here.”

“What a coincidence. After watching all of your conducts, this great one could shed tears of blood.”

I was watching over these crazy girls while wondering how much of their brains they had thrown away in a ditch. The more I watched them, the more I grew curious about the name of the bastard who was crazy enough to make these girls into their Royal Guard. If it weren’t for the fact that that crazy bastard was me, then I may have been a bit more curious.

“Ahahah, master.”

Hop.

Humbaba skipped towards me and stuck out her cone hat.

Curious as to what this girl was now up to, I looked down and saw that there was a bunch of dirt inside of her hat. After examining the muddy pile of dirt a bit more, I saw that it was a pile of dirt with several dandelions sticking out of it.

Did she put them in her hat without even dusting the dirt off from their roots? There were dandelions contained in the witch's hat. I knitted my brows.

“What is this?”

“We contemplated and contemplated about what the likes of us could possibly give to you, Master, as a gift to celebrate your release. No matter how much we thought about it, we weren't able to think of a gift that could make you happy, Master. Even if the likes of us were to offer Master our bodies, Master has always been a eunuch, so what good would that do when you won't taaaake us?”

“I see that you girls believe that every male in the world must respond to you. How should I fix that misunderstanding of yours? If anything, do you not know that there are only a small minority of males in the world that will respond to you girls?”

“Master's absolute majority is mistaken. History proves otherwise.”

“I do not wish to know about that sort of history…….”

For there to be a history where responding to these girls was the correct thing to do and not responding to them was the wrong thing to do. What was that supposed to be? The Necronomicon? Was this like a textbook of evil or the Devil's scroll of incantations?

Humbaba shoved her left hand into her hat. The left hand which I had maimed by severing the ring finger of at one point in time.

There was a lot of moisture in the clump of dirt, so the inside was exceedingly dirty. Even if it was unclean, that dirt was unclean

because it was alive. The small witch in front of me plucked a dandelion, which was unclean because it was still alive, with a ‘snap’.

“Master. Ahah. It’s a bit late, but.”

After she placed the dandelion behind my ear.

“Congratulation on your release!”

She smiled radiantly.



“.....”

I was at a lost for words for a moment.

The witches giggled. It was light. It was truly a light sound. The sound of laughter easily spread into the sky and permeated with ease. And I believed that that lightness, was like that because it had thrown a small bit of its life away somewhere.

Farnese spoke.

“Your Lordship. It seems that among the masses, people consider the act of putting a flower behind your ear as proof of one’s insanity. Coincidentally, it appears that there is a flower behind Your Lordship’s ear. This young lady is not trying to go out of her way to provide an additional explanation or anything, but it is just that, this young lady simply wishes to say that Your Lordship has coincidentally become an insane person.”

“If my brain has yet to necrotize, then Farnese, were you not passionately confessing your love to me only a few minutes ago?”

“.....? What of it? Is there a meaningful correlation between Your Lordship’s lunacy and this young lady’s love?”

This young girl who was tilting her head and sincerely questioning me as to what sort of correlation the two had, was the child I had taken in as my adopted daughter in this world. How insane. Truly regretful. By the looks of it, it seems that this life will be dirty just like my previous life.

Nevertheless, I did not excessively complain today.

I simply.

“.....Hoeh?”

“Hoi?”

With my right hand on Farnese's head.

And my left hand on Humbaba's head, I stroked both of their heads and spoke.

"Thanks."

For winning a difficult battle.

For being the first person to gift me a flower ever since I had fallen into this world.

I am grateful to you both.

My Acting General and Captain of the Royal Guard looked at each other for a moment before eventually smiling radiantly like a hydrangea and a dandelion that had bloomed side by side.

"This young lady loves you, Your Lordship."

"I really like you, Master!"

Regardless of what sort of enunciation that love was said with and regardless of what sort of hope that like was said with.

We were already a family.



The advent of the Crescent Alliance.

It was most likely thanks to the fact that we had strongly obstructed the pursuers in Vistula Forest, the sea of trees. Barbatos and Paimon, the main army of the Crescent Alliance were able to

cross the Black Mountains without having to face any danger whatsoever.

On the very night the battle had ended in the sea of trees, the two Demon Lords had both sent a letter. Barbatos and Paimon were currently busy pushing ahead with their march. They had both only written a single line in their letters.

— Thanks. We'll be going first. Follow.

— Sorry. I'll leave Sitri in your care.

When in a situation where one had to say thank you and also apologize to a single person, then there are people who would say thank you first and there are people who would say sorry first. Barbatos was the former. Paimon was the latter. The difference between the former and latter was definitely due to the rift that had torn the two apart in the past.

I strolled through the military camp which we had set up throughout the entire night and gazed up at the afternoon sky. A group of soldiers noticed me as they were passing by and saluted to me. I shook my head and omitted their show of respect.

“The monarch should be the one to show their respects to the soldiers who have triumphed. You all have fought well. You all have held out well. A lot of meat has been provided, so today's meal shall be substantial.”

The soldiers expressed their gratitude and continued on their way. Even if I was nothing more than ranked 71st, I was still an honorable Demon Lord. What cute fellows. I chuckled at the natural modesty of the officers and men and went into deep thought once more.

.....Elizabeth, the Imperial Princess was defeated. She had lost

some of her troops. Her perfect record of victory had been smeared as well. However, defeat was nothing more than an immediate disgrace, the Imperial Princess had obtained something larger.

The fact that when the Crescent Alliance retreated, she was the only person to have declared for the battle to continue until the very end.

The fact that she had actually led the pursuit in person with her royal standing.

The fact that while she was leading and fighting in person, her royal body had actually been injured.

I lamented by myself.

“.....The commoners of humanity will most likely cheer. They will cheer loudly.”

Justification.

When the other nations were reluctant to step forward and the majority of the armies were chickening out, the justification of having stood forward without any hesitation in order to exterminate the demons.

The battle in Vistula Forest was fierce, desperate, and severe. Both of the individuals who could be referred to as the heads of each respective side had been hit by a bolt. If they had been even slightly more unlucky, then they could have died.

Soldiers naturally respected generals who would charge forward even while in the face of danger more than anyone else. It was not only the soldiers. The simple commoners will also cheer the birth of a hero.....

The undefeated blonde general who was favored by the Goddess Athena. That was Laura De Farnese. Imperial Princess Elizabeth was no different.

“On one hand, there is a blonde general, and on the other hand, there is a silver-haired empress.”

These two could only be stopped by one another. It was like that in the original history as well. In this life, I had accelerated the inevitability of history more fiercely. Even in the future, the continent will most likely rock under the military ability of gold and silver.

Last night, Imperial Princess Elizabeth had lowered her guard. She had mistaken Farnese for a dead corpse or a puppet…….

A bitter mistake, O Elizabeth. She may have been like that when you had met her previously, but that was not the case last night. Farnese had bloomed in less than a couple of days. I, this child's lord and father, had made this happen.

In consequence of the time of a mere couple of days, you were defeated yesterday. You were most likely unable to predict this. You may have even thought of this as cheating. Regardless, the place where your absence of awareness was located was where your incompetence laid, and the point where you considered this as cheating was where your limit was placed.

‘There is no way that someone could change within a few days.’

That was the incompetence and limit which you possess. A person is able to change within a few days, and if they have the assistance of another, then even more so.

From this point on, the war you and I will create will always possess the time of several days. Perhaps, it will be a war that vies for the time of several hours. Even on the noon of the day where an unparalleled victory had been obtained, I am already predicting the next war.

It was in that moment.

“Mm……?”

In the distance, a single group of cavalry units was approaching from the other side of the military camp. Were they friend or foe? If they were neither, then were they deserters? I narrowed my eyes and gazed into the distance.

The cavalry unit was holding up 3 banners. First, a white flag which represented that they wished to negotiate and not battle. Next, a black flag with the dark moon of the Crescent Alliance engraved on it. And finally, a fluttering flag that displayed who they were affiliated with and radiating a golden shine.

A maxim was written on the banner.

Know thyself.

“.....”

A banner that was half white and half red. Adding to that, a maxim that was sewn on with golden letters. The one who strives to coexist between peace and war, and strives to bask in the glory of gold while within that coexistence.

Ranked 5th on the demon continent.

The lord in charge of nobility.

The sacred and inviolable representative of absolute dignity.

“.....Demon Lord Marbas.”

The monarch of the Neutral Faction was lurking in the distance.

▯ **The King of Peasants, Rank 71st, Dantalian**
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 15
Polles

‘This is reckless.’ Lapis remonstrated.

‘This young lady will be unable to protect you.’ Farnese advised.

‘Well, Master is nuts, so if need be, this one will die together with you!’ Humbaba offered.

While having refused the remonstrations, keeping the advice in mind, and shouldering the offer, I, Dantalian, headed towards the Neutral Faction’s military headquarters.

The night was dark as midnight had passed. The only one who could be called my guard was Humbaba, but even then, she had been disarmed. Additionally, they had gone as far as to inspect Humbaba’s undergarments after having stripped her of them. Her flesh which had been torn due to the long period of torture she had endured was displayed in plain sight.

“Ahahah. I haven’t hidden anything, I have nothing to hide. I really don’t have anything on me. Do you think I’m crazy enough to mess around with the Demon Lord who has a mortgage on my soul? I’m Humbaba. The head witch that leads the Three Nightmares. I’d be delighted if you showed some respect to the Quadriphlyous medal that’s attached to my hat.”

“.....”

The sentry looked Humbaba up and down before giving a nod. Humbaba was then allowed entry to the Neutral Faction’s camp. It was really after they had checked every nook and cranny of her body.

Humbaba was all smiles.

“Did you see that, Master? It’s because of behavior like this that I end up believing that the absolute majority of the males in the world desire my body. Even if I try to go somewhere comfortably, they do this kind of nonsense.”

“My God. Your entire life is your own self-torment.”

“Aha, I can’t deny that. As expected of Master. If you added the fact that my self-torment is my own torture, then it’d be perfect.”

We walked together as master and servant while murmuring to each other. The soldiers of the Neutral Faction followed us closely on both of our sides. The torches held by the soldiers illuminated their expressions. As one would expect from elite soldiers, they were all expressionless, but despite that, they would occasionally furrow their brows whenever they glanced at Humbaba.

How long did we walk for, I wonder.

We were guided to a particularly massive tent. It was a military tent that was made by connecting tiger pelts together. Due to the fact that both Barbatos and Paimon did not have a personality that quibbled over the luxury of their quarters, the tent that I was currently seeing was the most luxurious one I have ever seen.

All of the sentries that were standing guard at the entrance had a Diphyllous medal attached to their helmets. The medal that was in the form of a leaf was an honor that was only bestowed upon those who had participated in a Crescent Alliance and had performed a meritorious deed.

As this was the 8th Crescent Alliance and the expedition had yet to end, those medals were undoubtedly from the 7th and 6th expeditions. This meant that the sentries, whose numbers reached slightly over twenty, were all veteran warriors who were able to survive for the past 200 years. Humbaba needlessly behaved like a restless shih tzu and pointed at her own cone hat.

“MasterMaster. Look at this. This one has a Quadriphllyous.”

“.....”

“At most, all they have are Diphyllouses. Ahahah. This one is twice as strong as them!”

Wow.

The sentries glared daggers at us the instant Humbaba had spat out those words. I am still a Demon Lord in spite of my appearance. I passed my hand over the horn attached to the back of my head and whispered.

“.....Even if you say that you have four leaves, did you not receive your fourth leaf by kowtowing before Her Highness Paimon after having performed some trickery? I beg of you. Keep in mind the fact that we are in the middle of an army that may or may not abruptly become hostile towards us.”

“Eeh. But I have a chronic disease where I become sullen if I close my mouth for even a moment.”

“At the very least, can you not whisper in a voice which only I can hear?”

“Gasp. Don’t tell me, was that perhaps a secret confession to this one? You mustn’t, Master. This one already has a master who she has devoted her affection to, so this one cannot possibly give Master this one’s body.....!”

Yeah.

Whatever.

What more could I have expected from you?

Just grow up healthy.

While receiving the clear glares of the sentries, Humbaba and I

continued to chat. Once nearly half an hour had passed, a low voice resonated from within the tent.

“Demon Lord Dantalian, enter.”

The tone of the voice was antique. However, a harsh growl which could not be entirely placated by the antiquity lingered in the voice. I wonder if this is how it would sound like if a brown bear were to learn the language of people.

I brushed Humbaba’s hair behind her ear.

“I will be back.”

“Yes, Master.”

Humbaba smiled brightly.

“This one will be waiting. Always.”



Similar to how the military tent appeared grand on the outside, it was vast on the inside as well. I believed that I resided in a luxurious tent because of how much money I had spent on it, but the quarters which the head of the Neutral Faction resided in was on a different level.

12 attendants were all lowering their heads in silence. 6 royal bodyguards with either a sword attached to their waist or a spear held in their hands were gazing at me. A red carpet was laid out on the floor of the tent and a large throne was situated on the edge of the carpet. A monarch was obliquely resting his back on that very throne.

Within a place that should not be referred to as a tent.

But would be better off being referred to as a palace located in the center of an enemy campsite.

“Dantalian.”

The monarch spoke.

“It is admirable for you to have come here alone. Are you here to answer my call?”

Marbas stared straight into my face.

His face was close. His gaze was unwavering. The monarch’s many years of experience were spread across his face as wrinkles. The monarch’s firm persistence spread through his steady shoulders. As someone who did not distinguish between beliefs and life, a monarch who has only gathered beliefs with life and life with beliefs was seated in front of me. He was a perfectly firm monarch.

“The last time I saw you was immediately after the speech declaring the onset of war. Were you not imprisoned?”

I lowered my head and answered.

“This one’s sins had been forgiven, so this one was released.”

“So I have heard. Were you released on the same day on which the tragedy on Bruno Plains had occurred?”

“Yes, Your Excellency. That is the case.”

“I have also heard that you are Barbatos’ lover. Allow me to ask you this; were you, in any way, involved in that tragedy?”

“.....”

I contemplated for a moment.

Lying in this situation was an easy task. I was confident in my ability of deception as well. There were also many different ways of answering this question in a vague manner. However, feigning ignorance was most likely not what was important right now. Naturally raising the favorable impression which this monarch has of me was more crucial.

‘In good terms, he is a principlist.’ Paimon had commented.

‘In better terms, he’s a damn aggressive old fossil.’ Barbatos had commented.

‘And he is a bald old man.’

‘And he’s a bald old man.’

These weren’t particularly important comments.

I shook my head as I mentally marveled at my own accursed memory.

“Your Excellency, this one had witnessed the tragedy with this one’s very own two eyes. As this one could not stop it despite having witnessed it, even if this one could stop it, this one would have not done so, therefore it would be shameful if this one were to claim that this one was not involved in that tragedy in any way.”

“That is an appropriate and sound argument. Raise your head.”

I did so.

The monarch was wearing a monocle over his right eye. The candles located here and there throughout the tent would occasionally angle themselves towards the monocle and cause it to shine. Although it was difficult for me to look straight at the monarch’s face, the monarch looked me up and down entirely.

“Dantalian, since you are the youngest amongst us and have the lowest rank, I assume that you had barely any involvement with that

incident. Even on the very day where blood was shed, you were most likely unable to get involved at all as you were doing your time behind bars. Amongst all of those fellows who are going around claiming to be the Crescent Alliance, you alone are innocent.”

“This one is honored, Your Excellency.”

That wasn’t the case at all.

I regret to inform you, Marbas, but if one had to pick out who was the main culprit behind the bloodshed, then I am the very first person who should be pointed at first. Originally, I am the one who you should be hostile towards the most. Regardless, there is no other choice but for you to have this sort of misunderstanding.

Because.

“Barbatos and Paimon had mercilessly set you at the rear, they had left you behind and made you take on the approaching humans. There is no doubt that they had turned you into a sacrificial lamb under the condition of your release. Do you not feel vexed?”

Yes.

Because no matter how you look at my situation, people would only be able to see it **like this**.

“.....”

Aah, I laughed inside of my head. In spite of all of my consideration, Imperial Princess Elizabeth and I were the same. For us, the victory and defeat of battles were nothing more than secondary issues.

Victory was beautiful and sweet, however, was defeat not humiliating and disgraceful? In the very rare chance you are faced with a battle where you can be humiliated and disgraced, you must make sure that it is a battle where you are able to obtain something even if you are defeated. Traditionally, engaging in only these sorts of

battles was the proper thing to do.

The Imperial Princess was defeated. Despite that, she had obtained a justification. That justification was an item which she could obtain regardless of her victory or defeat. Hence, that was the reason why the Imperial Princess had pursued us to the sea of trees without any hesitation.

I had triumphed. However, even if I were to have lost, my innocence would have been proven either way. To the other demons, I was a poor, pitiable, and pathetic individual, an underling who had been played around by Barbatos and Paimon before being tossed away like a hand of cards.

I had won. However, even if our forces had won, what had I been doing? Where was I when Farnese had been hit by a bolt and the witches were putting their lives on the line? In the rear. I was setting up an encampment in the safe backline and taking in the stragglers.

Although I had won, since it was a victory which was clearly not due to my own efforts, I was standing one step to the side of the glory of victory. Some people may consider this treatment to be unreasonable——but I deem this to be the most beautiful conclusion imaginable.

I felt as if I could hear the public ridiculing me from even here.

— Demon Lord Dantalian. An individual who had somehow gained a windfall, however, he wastes his wealth unsparingly for his lowly lover because he is a fool.

— Demon Lord Dantalian. He was fortunate enough to somehow recruit a genius as his general, however, he never goes out into battle himself because he is a coward.

— Demon Lord Dantalian. An individual who was somehow able to survive to this day due to pure luck, however, he is constantly used by

Barbatos and Paimon because he is an idiot among idiots.

A lecher. A coward. An idiot.

How beautiful these whispers are.

On this vast continent, the number of monarchs who are aware that I am acting behind the scenes can be counted on a single hand. Barbatos, Paimon, Sitri, Ivar Lodbrok, and Elizabeth. There was no one else beyond these individuals.

Five people.

A mere five people.

It was a performance where I had to face only five people.

On the other hand——aah, Elizabeth. O Elizabeth whose silver locks are elegant. Imperial Princess who was born with the other half of my soul, behold the countless number of rivals whom you must face!

O Elizabeth. Every sovereign that is currently reigning in the human continent is afraid of you. This is because they had a premonition of you becoming a storm that will raise a new wave and swallow up the coast of the current age.

O Elizabeth. Even your aged biological father, the Emperor of Habsburg, is afraid of you. This is because he knows by intuition the fact that the blade which you have been sharpening until now will be used to stab him in the back and take his life.

O Elizabeth! Have even the Demon Lords of the demon continent not come to recognize you? You, who should have been silently subduing the human continent south of the Black Mountains, were discovered 10 years early. This is because I had courteously invited you to the stage.

O Elizabeth.

O Imperial Princess whose red eyes resemble the color of blood.

O Empress who, during the previous night, had shed blood for a moment after having been assaulted by Farnese in the darkness. You are competent to no end. Because you are competent to no end, you will no longer be careless when going against Farnese. Thus, in the next battle, you may even possibly bring Farnese to her knees. Not only the next battle, but the battle after that, and the battle after that, you might even come out victorious in the fourth battle and the fifth battle that follows after that. Even if everyone in the world does not believe in your victory, **I alone shall believe in you.** You are an empress who was originally destined to conquer the world, that is how sublime you are.

‘But for how long?’ a single lecher asks.

‘For how long will you continue to win?’ this coward taunts.

‘Will you win forever and triumph eternally?’ this idiot scoffs.

Are you trying to handle Farnese by herself? Manage her. You will be able to do so. I am aware that you are capable of handling her with ease. However, are you also capable of handling every sovereign in the human continent and every Demon Lord in the demon continent at the same time? Is that something which can be handled just because you said you could handle it?

Look. This lecher, coward, and idiot is asking you a question. A question that is more important than anything else. A question shared solely within our breaths as they mix together.

O Elizabeth.

Can you handle the entire world?

I can. Aah, it is more than possible for me. Why? Because I had made it so that I had less than five cast members to deal with early on!

Five! Even if I possessed a talent that is slightly lacking when compared to yours, I am not obscure to the point of being incapable of dancing around with a mere five people.

Five! Even if my plots are insufficient and my schemes are poor when compared to yours, they are more than enough to toy with five people and run the show.

Five! One of those five fingers, Ivar Lodbrok, has already fallen and is now my slave. Now the number of people I have to deal with has decreased by one. What have you decreased while I was lowering my numbers? By some chance, did you not actually increase your numbers?

Five! One of the obvious five fingers, Demon Lord Sitri, has descended to a position where it was now difficult for her to raise her face while in front of me because she had lost to you. According to my intelligence, she and Zepar had been captured as prisoners by Demon Lord Marbas. Very good. How pleasant.

Sitri still refuses to submit to me. It was too soon to pull down her final bulwark. However, not only was her fall going to happen soon, but this was also a **preordained plan**. Once it happens, this will mean that another leading actor among the main five will step down from my stage.

I spend my time leisurely while on my gradually diminishing stage. You are the complete opposite. The stage which you must handle will continue to broaden ad infinitum. I shall give you my applause and cheers. Go ahead and try to perform a one-man play while on a stage that goes against the world.

Will you not be beautiful?

Will you not crumble beautifully?

Will you not exude a fragrance when you crumble?

Elizabeth, Atanaxia, Evatriae, von Habsburg…….

Even in this moment, I draw you in my mind.

Do not be too disappointed just because you were unable to meet me in the forest of white aspen trees. If we were unable to meet, then that simply means that it was not yet the time to meet. Be patient. You and I are each other's fate. When waiting for one's destiny, that wait is simply a happy melody. Until the day our fate strikes the earth like a thunderbolt, we have to be happy by waiting…….

“Dantalian.”

Look.

A supporting actor who was as terrifying as a bear was standing over there.

However, no matter how terrifying he was, he was nothing more than a supporting actor. Was that not the case? Now let us listen to what he has to say.

“You no longer have to be afraid of Barbatos and Paimon who have tossed you away. Be embraced within my shade. I shall take you in. Stand underneath my banner. I shall lead you. Look towards the direction which I point. I shall promise you.”

Good. This was the language of a monarch who lived life. I could smell the scent of dirt. How beautiful. Clouds of dust would most likely billow if war horses were to charge on top of this ground which had been dried by the sun.

“I promise a crown land where our kind will not kill one another. I vow that it will be a kingdom where people will not be killed even if there is a reason for them to be killed. Even if I collapse and break apart, at least this promise and vow will be eternal. How about it, Ranked 71st Demon Lord?”

The monarch continued.

“Will you follow me?”

“.....”

I made the smile of my heart stop at my heart and composed myself.

My expression was still calm and my complexion was temperate. My voice did not reflect the temperature of my heart so it was serene. I slowly lowered my head to make it appear as if I was being pressured by Marbas' grandeur.

“.....Your Excellency. Your Excellency's royal grace is immeasurable and inscrutable. If this one were allowed the opportunity to rest underneath Your Excellency's shade, then how could this one possibly refuse? However, before this Dantalian, this humble one can entrust this one's pitiable body to Your Excellency, there is something which this one must tell Your Excellency first.”

“Do you wish for a private audience?”

“Yes, Your Excellency.”

“You all may leave.”

There was no one who dared to question his order.

The sound of both the attendants and bodyguards' footsteps seeped into the carpet before it soon subsided. The sound of breathing coming from slightly over twenty people had disappeared in a single effort. The extravagant military tent was more forlorn because of that

very extravagance.

The monarch spoke.

“What do you wish to tell me?”

“This one is the emissary of both Barbatos and Paimon.”

“.....”

The air was cold.

Marbas looked at me quietly. I wonder if he was angry or if he was looking at me carefully. It was hard to fathom. Similar to how I had composed the temperature of my heart and did not let it appear in my voice, it seems that Marbas did not allow the temperature of his chest to flow out from his gaze.

“If you are an emissary, then does that mean you have a letter which you must deliver to me?”

“This one does not have such a thing.”

“Then how is someone like you able to consider yourself as an emissary?”

“Because this one has an item which proves that this one is an emissary.”

“Show me.”

“This one shall present it to Your Excellency, but.”

I bowed my head once more.

“Before that, this one must first convey the words which both parties had passed on.”

“I shall allow it. However, bear in mind the fact that your life is resting on top of a blade.”

“This one always has the preservation of this one’s own life as this one’s utmost priority, Your Excellency.”

I cleared my throat.

I adjusted my clothes and raised my head.

I stared straight at the man before me. A large physique with a shoulder span that was wider than my own by three times, was looking down at me. However, I could not be overawed. Since I had set myself up as the emissary of both parties, I was no longer ranked 71st, the youngest of Demon Lords, and was now the representative of both the Plains and Mountain Factions.

“I convey this message not to the Neutral Faction but to Demon Lord Marbas alone.”

“.....”

“We purposely did not inform you of our plans beforehand.”

“.....What?”

A wavering appeared in the gaze of the monarch who had resembled a serene lake until now. Of course, it was not a well-disposed wavering towards me. As if he intended to give me a single opportunity to explain myself before releasing his wrath, Marbas frowned as he glared at me.

I explained.

“Your Excellency, both parties did not inform Your Excellency about the purge on purpose. Although this action is a behavior that is nothing short of ridicule, it was, at the same time, for Your Excellency’s sake as well.”

“Those are fickle words. How was it for my sake?”

“From this point on, the Crescent Alliance will be engaging in an

all-out war against the Demon Lords who had remained on the demon continent. Nevertheless, even if we will be engaging in an all-out war, is there a need for us to wipe them out? How could uprooting every single commoner who resides in the territories ruled by the other Demon Lords be the will of both parties?”

“.....”

After all is said and done, Barbatos acted for the sake of the people. It was an arbitrary love and hatred. Paimon also loved the people. It was a self-righteous affection. Although they were arbitrary and self-righteous, there were no other monarchs who acted for the sake of demonkind more than these two Demon Lord.

“If the war lasts for a long period of time, then a time where a ceasefire is necessary will come. Even if it is not a ceasefire, an agreement will be established. If an agreement is to be established, then would there not be a need for a person to be in the middle in order to mediate the two sides? Would it not be difficult for a person from either side to act as a mediator?”

“.....”

“Your Excellency, the sin for having betrayed the Crescent Alliance and selling out our fellow kind is unspeakably immense and deep, but if both parties were to have discussed this matter with Your Excellency first, then they would have been able to convince Your Excellency with ease. This one assumes that several parasites hiding in Your Excellency’s shade would have been sent to the afterlife as well. However, if things were to have gone that way, then coming to an agreement would have been next to impossible and we would have been faced with an excruciatingly difficult situation.”

The monarch went silent.

“So was I excluded for the sake of the peace that will follow afterward?”

“That is correct.”

“What are your true intentions behind not having brought the information you had conveyed to me in a letter and presenting it to me like that?”

“There are too many eyes around Your Excellency. Starting from Rank 1st Baal and all the way to Rank 4th Gamigin. Similar to how their eyes were looming close to the Plains and Mountain Factions, they are most likely hiding within the Neutral Faction in an identical manner. If this one were to have brought a letter, then there is a chance that it could have been revealed when this one’s body was searched. Regardless of whether the contents of the letter were revealed or not, the very information that ‘Dantalian had a secret letter’ would have been passed on to someone. Conveying the message and trust through a letter was dangerous.”

“.....”

“Your Excellency, I beg for your understanding.”

Understanding.

The act of looking deeply into a candlelight.

By simply looking only at the light burning in a lamp, looking past the things which can and cannot be seen and feeling them out.

Fathoming the connection between light and light.

Similar to how I had connected smoke with smoke all the way to the other side of the Black Mountains, the ones who were capable of pulling this off were monarchs, and they could only be monarchs by managing this.

“Please believe in Your Excellency’s comrades of both parties who have been together with Your Excellency on battlefields for over four hundred years. Her Excellency Barbatos and Her Highness Paimon are sworn enemies, but for what reason does Your Excellency think that they had joined hands for? Would it not be because there are parasites that are more scornful than their own sworn enemies lying

dormant behind them?”

“.....”

Marbas closed his eyes.

The silence lasted solitarily within the military tent. The silence was tenacious. The monarch’s wrinkles which could be seen through his monocle were dark.

The monarch’s mouth finally opened after a long period of time.

“.....Those ladies who frolic so much that the world aches. Do they intend to give me the hardest role?”

“Yes. That is how it is. Your Excellency must pretend to fight and quarrel with both parties. If Your Excellency’s performance is poor, then the Demon Lords north of the Black Mountains will see through it with ease.”

I bowed with respect.

“Your Excellency, please take me hostage and breach the Black and White Fortresses. Pursue the two parties as if you are chasing them as fast as possible. At this moment, the Demon Lords north of the Black Mountains are most likely preoccupied because of the Crescent Alliance’s withdrawal. Their field of vision will become narrow and Your Excellency will most likely be the first person to appear in their field of vision. Take advantage of that.”

“I have already captured Zepar and Sitri. Do I need more?”

“The more, the better, Your Excellency.”

“.....”

The monarch groaned slowly.

“It is you who is the loyal subject to all of demonkind. Despite having been sent to prison by them, you follow both Barbatos and

Paimon without any complaints and you offer yourself as a hostage for the sake of the demon continent. Dantalian, I give you my respect.”

The monarch then stuck out his left hand.

I surmised that Marbas wanted to shake hands with his left hand and not his right hand. It was from now on. The act of pretending to be hostile towards the Crescent Alliance was going to start from this point on.

“This one is honored, Your Excellency.”

It was at the moment I was about to accept his handshake.

“Mm.”

Squeeze.

Marbas grabbed my left hand with his rough grasp. For an instant, an immense pressure pressed down on the bones of my hand. Marbas gripped my hand just strong enough that it was barely short of making my bones creak and forcing my flesh to scream. Thanks to this, my expression had crumbled quite a bit.

“Your Excellency, what are you…….”

“Where is the evidence that proves you did not tell a lie?”

Marbas glared at me carefully.



“I am already aware that you are a smooth talker. I too was present in Niflheim when you had made Paimon kneel. How will you guarantee me here that you do not have treacherous intentions and that you are not planning to ridicule me and taunt the Crescent Alliance with that eloquence of yours?”

“.....”

“Where is the guarantee that we will not be ambushed while we are in the middle of making our way through the Black and White Fortresses after having been tricked by you? Dantalian, your expression is gentle and your eyes are soft, but there are plenty of swindlers out there in the world who are capable of camouflaging their complexions. How will you prove to me that you are not just ridiculing me?”

Surely. This was not bad.

The man before me did not waste his days as the head of the Neutral Faction in a slovenly way. This much wariness was obvious. Because it was obvious, I was obviously able to predict it. While an intense pain was going through the bones of my hand, I smiled slightly.

Yes.

I have been earnestly waiting for this very moment.

“O Honorable Marbas, if it turns out that this one had deceived Your Highness, then that would mean that this one was deceived by the two parties as well. This one has already requested Your Highness to take this one hostage. If an ambush were to actually occur at the Black and White Fortresses, then would it not be this one’s neck that would be sent flying first?”

“That is correct.”

The monarch nodded.

“Therefore, the problem is very simple. **How much do Barbatos and Paimon trust you?** This is the only issue which I must verify and you must prove. If Barbatos and Paimon possess a brain inside of their heads, then they would have definitely left with you a token of their trust. Have you brought one?”

“Of course, Your Excellency.”

I slowly took something out from my pocket.

An item which looked normal at glance and was something anyone who was reasonably rich would carry around with them.

Marbas knitted his brow when he saw the item.

“Hm? Is that not a pocket watch?”

“It is not a pocket watch, Your Excellency. It is a memoria artifact which contains essential evidence. The witches that are under my command enjoy enchanting pocket watches with memory magic, so I have been using it quite handily.”

“Hooh.”

The pressure that was grabbing my left hand gradually diminished.

“That is considerate. If an emissary were to come with only a verbal message, then they would easily be doubted, but if you were to hide it within a watch, then you would be able to avoid this suspicion.”

“Your grace is immeasurable, Your Excellency.”

“All right. I am certain that that is a record which will display the weight of the trust that is lying on your shoulders. Go ahead and play it. I shall watch it carefully.”

“It is too soon for such words, Your Excellency.”

Without any hesitation, I started to turn the hour hand of the

pocket watch once I had been given the order to do so. Once at midnight. Once at midday. Once at midnight again, and back to midday. The hour hand, minute hand, and second hand of the pocket watch started to spin fiercely while letting out an audible ‘vrrr……’ sound before smoke started to flow out from the crevices of the watch.

And then.

Once I shined the watch on the smoke, it started to project the recording.

— Auh…, heuuuh……!?

“………….”

Marbas froze.

The sound of moans flowed out consecutively from the pocket watch. The silence of the military tent was broken capriciously. The honorable Demon Lord Marbas was simply staring up at the air with the same expression which his face had solidified into 10 seconds ago.

— No! Stop! Please, hey, wait, don’t……!?

— When did I allow you to speak words? A pig should oink like a pig!”

— Mm, oink……oinkoink, ooink……!

I grinned widely.

Although the work of art that had recorded Lapis had been destroyed and will no longer be able to obtain the honor of being the world's first, this work of art here was undoubtedly the world's first to feature a Demon Lord in the leading role.

“.....”

“Your Excellency had instructed this one to show you the evidence of how much trust Her Excellency Barbatos has in this one, correct?”

Now then.

I smiled broadly while displaying my rare and valuable work.

I was being projected on the smoke and in that scene with me was a woman. The woman coincidentally had hair that was white and gave off a silver shine, coincidentally had horns sticking out of her head, and also coincidentally had golden pupils.

— All right. What am I? Go ahead and say it with your own mouth. What am I, Dantalian, to you?

— Master……. Lord Dantalian, mm. Is my, Barbatos' master……!”

And coincidentally, her name was Barbatos.

“.....”

Without moving even a single inch, the head of the Neutral Faction was like a statue as he watched the recording which displayed the head of the Plains Faction referring to me as Master and being ridiculed. It seems that he had received the biggest shock he had ever experienced in his life and it had struck him right on his head. Space was also infinite and time was eternal.

5 minutes passed.

It was a beautiful 5 minutes.

“.....”

“.....”

Marbas was still.

I was smiling broadly.

“.....That.”

“Yes.”

“Don’t tell me.”

“Yes.”

“.....No, but?”

“That is the case.”

“Truly.....?”

“Surprisingly.”

“But, no matter how you think about it, the roles are.”

“This one thinks so as well.”

“Thus, it was not done by force but voluntarily.....?”

“This one shall mention that in this recording, this one did not have any free will whatsoever or even an inch of initiative.”

“.....”

Silence.

Marbas opened his mouth.

“Nevertheless, contrary to my expectation, are you not enjoying it as well?”

“Your Excellency, never once in this one’s life has this one ever suspected Your Excellency’s political neutrality, but that statement just now is raising a slight bit of doubt in this one. By all means, please be discerning.”

“Surely.”

Marbas let out a long groan.

“Barbatos, that reckless girl has finally obtained her mate…….”

“This one does not wish to mention it, but instead of getting rid of this one’s doubt, Your Excellency is increasing it more. This one can assure Your Excellency that that body type is not this one’s preference. If this one had to choose, then this one believes that Her Highness Paimon is splendid.”

“Paimon’s appearance is indeed quite marvelous. She is worthy of her title of Queen of Mares.”

I nodded.

I then asked Marbas.

“Does Your Excellency now understand **how trusted** this one is?”

“…….”

Marbas covered his forehead with his palm.

Marbas let his groans flow through the cracks of his fingers. It seems that he wished to pull at his hair as he contemplated, but due to the fact that no such thing was present on his head, it seems that he earnestly believed that this fact was quite unfortunate. Roughly, it seems that Marbas was Bhuddistically seeking out who I was, where I had come from, and where I was going.

“.....”

Thinking.

“.....Mmm.....”

Anguish.

“Surely.....”

And resignation.

“I understand. I shall trust you, Dantalian.....”

After magnificently accomplishing the three steps of Buddhism, Marbas let out a sigh. Regrettably, it seems that he was unable to fulfill the final step of enlightenment, but who cares? It was fine. Regardless of how foul my temper was, I am not so cruel that I would scold the sadness of a bald man.

Therefore.

“This one will be in Your Excellency’s care from now on. Your Excellency Marbas, it may be rude of me to ask, but will Your Excellency be willing to listen to a single immediate ‘request’? Please consider this as a reward for this one as this one had come all the way here at this one’s own peril.”

“.....All right. No matter the wish, I shall willingly grant it as long as I am capable of doing so.”

I smiled truly refreshingly.

Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 15.

A secret alliance has been concluded between the Plains and Mountain Factions, and the Neutral Faction.

However, it is said that the number of people in the world who know about the decisive evidence behind the formation of the alliance can be counted on a single hand.....

FIN.

▯ **King's Beloved Slave, Berbere Witch Sisters, Captain of the
Royal Guard, Humbaba**
Empire Calendar: Year 1506, Month 4, Day 15
Polles, Near the Vistula Forest

Sheesh, hey. Sheesh. Look at their violent temper.

As expected, even the auras of a high-rank Demon Lord's royal bodyguards were on a different level.

Be it the sentries or the attendants, they were all glaring at me and whispering to each other. It can't be helped. They're the ones who want to badmouth me, so, by all means, I should allow them to eat tastily. It's fine, everyone. Chew properly, okay? Eat well. Chew. They say that you shouldn't even mess with a dog when they're eating, and in spite of my appearance, I'm a well-mannered girl. Ahahah.

—To make a witch one's captain of their Royal Guard......

— How could such a noble personage appoint this kind of lowly peasant......

— Harlots of souls with worn-out asses......

Is it not amazing? Not only do people spew words from their mouths, but they spew words from their eyes as well. Yup. Strictly speaking, before putting an eyeball into those eye sockets, were those sockets not also holes?

Holes are holes. Something is either rammed into those holes or

flows out from them, and that is what people believed in. Similar to how words come out of mouths and shit comes out of asses, something flows out from the eyes as well.

Scorn.

Ridicule.

Contempt.

In any case, similar to how people require their daily bread in order to live, to them, those were things they required in order to live in their own way.

— Hey, look at that. They say that's a witch who's lived for several centuries.

— She looks completely like a child…….

— She's looking this way. She really looks annoying.

No. These were all irrelevant words. Hey, you young attendants over there.

Clack…… clack……, it's starting to get really annoying because they've been tossing pebbles at me since earlier. You could easily get a grasp of the beautiful color and charm of their personalities by the fact that they were throwing pebbles and not stones. If I were injured by a stone, then regardless of the fact that he's at the tail end of the Demon Lord rankings, it would mean that they had assaulted me, Master's Captain of his Royal Guard. Thus, pebbles. Haah, these cheeky fellows.

……When's Master coming back?

He's late. A bit.

There's nothing to do, so I might as well hum the song that I had written the lyrics of.

“The old man inquired— How impressive must it be for you all to praise it so—.”

Ah. I'm not saying this because I had created this, but this is a complete masterpiece. I'm serious. Be it the humans or the demons, in the end, monarchs compete in order to see who has the bigger penis.

The likes of us had mused over this, but no matter how we looked at it, the one who has the biggest penis in the world is our master, Dantalian.

“The person's name is Dantalian with a sorrowful penis—.”

Master was that.

Not only was his penis big, but a peculiar lamentableness gloomed over it as well. It feels as if it should be called either sorrow or regret, but if you were to try and find an appropriate expression, then there was the shade of a person whose life was either fucked or had been fucked. Alas. Thus, as Master's penis is a large penis, it was also the most sorrowful penis…….

My God.

Even I get shivers if I think about it. How perfect is my gift?! If Apollo were to see me, then he would despair so much that he wouldn't come to work that day and make the world dark for the rest of the day. In other words, my gift is so formidable that it is capable of inadvertently stopping the sun itself……. If the sun stops, then everything in the world would stop, and if everything in the world stopped, then there would only be the last breaths of all things there, so, in other words, my gift is so tremendous that it could destroy the universe……. If the universe is destroyed, then even if space is infinite and time is eternal, there would be no point to them, so, in other words, my gift is so destructive that it could instantly make time and

space useless…….

Humbaba.

How sinful this woman is…….

I know. I am well aware of my deep sin. I was gifted with a fate that could threaten the sun and all things just by being born. Every wandering minstrel in the world envies me and every flower bud in the world begrudges me, so the world has no other choice but to struggle against me by forming an anti-witch alliance.

So even those young attendants over there had received the mission to repel me, as they were the so-called informants among informants of the alliance……. How could this be? Without even being aware of their situation, I…… you insane pieces of shit throwing pebbles, it wouldn't be enough to shove a stick up your asses, set those sticks on fire, and burn all of your internal organs, you're fuckers who will only be able to fart for the rest of your lives…… had thought this, oh no……. Cry a little bit here, I went a bit too far, didn't I……? I'm sorry. I apologize. From now on, I will try to understand everyone by considering each one of your situations a bit more……. Add some more tears here, I, Humbaba, will be born anew and pay everyone a visit as a better me…….

Now then, was that enough? Haah, these cheeky fellows.

— It's true. She really isn't reacting at all…….

— See? She's just singing like a crazy person.

— ……They say they don't have a soul. That's why they stay as kids and stop growing…….

Yeah, It's fine.

Go ahead and throw things at me. Everyone. Throw. If throwing that is what is needed in your lives, then it can't be helped. In spite of my appearance, I'm a generous girl.

Tear me apart. While people live their lives, there are periods where they must bite into other people's necks and have a taste of blood. It can't be helped since all of your lives are broken. This generous girl will understand your desires to blame something which cannot be blamed.

Burn me. What can be done when burning people is something that's needed in your lives? If you have to burn someone, then burn them. Chew properly. Have a nice meal. Eat. Despite my appearance, I'm a girl who doesn't die easily. As it's fine, it's fine and also fine.

There's no end to something being fine.

There are no bounds to something being fine.

That's why the act of being fine is unlimited.

Hey, you attendants over there. If there's a problem, then it's you guys. The fact that there are ends and bounds to your lives. Ah, wouldn't that be quite the problem? Did you know? Everyone, you're going to die. You'll all die.

That, throwing is all right, but you're throwing away the days of your lives. You say that it's fine to tear me apart, but you're all tearing your own time apart while you tear me to pieces. You'll die, you know? Are you going to keep burning me? Are you going to burn me again? What more do you intend to burn? Your own corpses?

Throw away a day.

Burn one by one.

Tear apart a day once more.

Burn one by one once more.

A day.

One.

And then.

Mm.

Gaya.

Let's just smoke some gaya.

.....

Huaaaaaah.

.....

Huuu, haaaaa.....

Yeah.

Well.

What?

What are you staring at, you attendants? Do you have a problem? I won't sympathize with you people. I'm capable of doing so, but I won't. I can't. Do you know why? I don't know what you guys hate the most in the world, but once you receive my sympathy, then in that moment, the thing which you guys hate the most in the world will automatically change into receiving a witch's sympathy.

When's Master coming back?

He's late.

A bit.

.....

Ah. Fuck.

Hey, you attendants over there? Just because I'm not responding to you guys doesn't mean that you should throw actual stones, you fucks. It hurts. Hey. Look here. It hurts. Hey! Ah, fuck, it hurts, you know?

Haah.

These cheeky fellows.....

While I was in the middle of pouring curses at those pieces of trash in my mind, from within the tent, a voice which I hadn't heard in quite a long time flowed out.

“Send in Dantalian's witch.”

Hoi?

I glanced around to see if I had misheard just now. The attendants and bodyguards were also looking around with the same looks on their faces. No one was able to respond, but a voice came from within the tent once more.

“Is no one there? I told you to send in the witch.

“.....”

Mmmm—.

I stood up from the ground and dusted my clothes. A bunch of pebbles poured down on the ground. The sentries glared at me with bloodthirst in their eyes. The attendants were panicking as they whispered among one another.

.....This is strange.

I did become a witch after forming a contract with Marbas, but there was no doubt that Marbas had forgotten about me by now. An incredible amount of time had already passed since then. He wasn't a

Demon Lord who concerned himself with witches in the first place.

It was efficient to set up a witch as a sacrifice whenever a large epidemic passed by. He was quite the rational ruler who would occasionally use witches for that reason alone.

If you work well after having formed a contract, then he doesn't concern himself with you aaat aaall. The one who managed me wasn't Marbas either, it was one of his bureaucrats.

In good terms, he was an expedient person. In bad terms, he was a person who only concentrated on tasks that befitted Demon Lords after having passed down every dirty task to his subordinates. No. Well. Compared to Euryale who was caught by a pervert like Glasyalabolas and was presented 200 years of torture by the Demon Lord personally, I'm incredibly fortunate.

Mmmm.

But why is he calling for me?

During the 150 years, I went around the town plaza whenever an epidemic or a year of famine occurred, but I don't recall ever meeting Marbas during those times. At all. Not even once.

I've been incredibly successful lately, so I spend my days sleeping in the same tent as Master Dantalian, but normally, this is something that could never happen.....

In any case, I'm going because I was summoned. After dusting all the gravel off of me, putting my cone hat on properly, and obliquely holding up my broom, I hastily walked into the tent.

.....

"This lowly one has entered, as this one was ordered to do so by the Great Demon Lord."

"Welcome."

Master Dantalian welcomed me with a smooth smile the instant I entered.

“.....”

On the other hand, Demon Lord Marbas was looking this way while frowning. His royal countenance appeared to be firmly displeased with something. How overwhelming. I feel sorry for having to display a peasant like myself to such noble eyes.

Master spoke.

“Humbaba.”

“Yes, Master?”

“I had a deep conversation with His Excellency Marbas here. It was quite the deep conversation. It was a conversation that was so deep that it could have been dangerous if it were any deeper. As a result, we were able to share a type of friendship that transcends my and His Excellency’s ranks. It is a friendship which only men can understand.”

Oho oho.

There’s some leeway for this to be interpreted in quite the dangerous way.

Referentially, for people like me, when something could be interpreted either dangerously or safely, I’m a girl who always interprets it dangerously. What I mean is, a hole is a hole, isn’t it? Although something flows out from them at times, things are rammed into them as well. I’m not trying to say something in particular, I’m just saying.

“This one gives her congratulations.”

“.....Hmm.”

Demon Lord Marbas let out a sigh as if he were dissatisfied. It must be due to his large frame, but even his sighs sound like the breathing of a brown bear.

“Dantalian, I suggest that you think once more.”

“This one’s decision will not change.”

“I had certainly said that I respected you. As one of the corps commanders responsible for the Crescent Alliance, the devotion which you had displayed naturally deserves to be rewarded. There are many things which I can bestow upon you as a reward.”

“Your Excellency is correct.”

Ara?

What are they talking about?

Even if I carefully examined Master’s expression, Master was simply smiling slightly. It’s hard to get a read on Master whenever he’s like this.

“I could give you commodities.”

“Yes.”

“I could promise you a new domain.”

“Yes.”

“I could also provide you with an appropriate amount of honor and reputation even if it may take some time.”

“Yes.”

“If you were to wish for wealth, then you would become wealthy, if you were to wish for strength, then you would become mighty, if you were to wish for honor, then you would become glorious. Do you truly wish to refuse all of this? Do you intend to reward your own

devotion and sacrifice with something like this?”

“This is sufficient.”

Master gave a small grin.

“Compared to any royal gift this one could hope for from Your Excellency, this one believes that the thing which this one had mentioned earlier is the most valuable. It is not a lie. It is not an exaggeration either. Wealth is wealth regardless of whose hands it ends up in, a domain is a domain regardless of whose foot steps on it, and this one is not interested in honor or reputation. However, Your Excellency, no matter how vast the continent is, this alone is something which only Your Excellency can bestow.”

“.....”

“If it is not Your Excellency’s royal hands, then it would be meaningless. If it is not Your Excellency’s royal legs, then it would be useless. Your Excellency is benevolently offering to grant this one’s wish, but how could this one dare to raise a petition?”

“.....”

Ara.

Really, what are they talking about?

Although I’m confident that I wouldn’t lose in regard to reading the atmosphere of one’s superiors, I have no idea what is being discussed right now.

Master Dantalian was simply gazing at me with a gentle smile on his face.

And Demon Lord Marbas.

“.....”

Was looking straight down at me.

Most likely for the first time.

Was it 300 years ago?

Was it 400 years ago?

Because I had thrown things away for a variety of reasons, was torn apart by a variety of things, and was burned by a variety of things, my memory of that time no longer remains as a whole. During that time, there was no spring, there was no summer, there was no autumn, and there was no winter. In that season, my time was chopped up into pieces and split up into small fragments. Whenever I dreamed, only the groans of imprecating and imprecating, I could only hear that season where tens of thousands of screams remained as an auditory hallucination.

“Witch Humbaba.”

“Yes?”

And then.

After calling my name for probably the first time ever, Demon Lord Marbas——.

.....,

.....Eh?



“———I am sorry, small witch.”

.....

.....Huh?

“Humbaba, I do not remember in what way I had wronged you. I also do not remember making you into my witch. However, even if I did remember how I had wronged you, I would, by all means, not regret it.”

.....Ara.

“I carry out things which I believe are necessary. Thus, if you had received pain, then I had most likely carried that out because I believed that was necessary as well. I am one of the lords who manages the demon continent. I am not sorry for the things which I had decided as a lord and the things I had carried out as a lord.”

.....

Yes....., but?

“The day I apologize to you while in the presence of my vassals and subjects will never come. Eternally. Therefore, I have no other choice but to apologize right now not as a lord, but as a single person.”

.....

.....

“I am sorry.”

Why.

“To you who was nothing more than a child, it was a cruel act.”

For what reason.

Why, now?

“I apologize to you.”

“.....”

Even though you never responded.

When I was hurting that much.

[illegible]

Even though you never said that you were even slightly sorry.

“I am sorry.”

Why.

.....

Ah.

Ah_____

since you are like a bitch who was birthed by a venomous
rubbish snake people like you should have never been born in
the first place it is a problem because you were born it was a
problem since the moment you were born the problem is that
you are alive that you have lived and that you are going to
continue to live although you are trash and you will most likely
live happily sticking your mouth in places even with that trashy
life of yours how dare you impudent bitches who cannot even
be saved by god go around saying that you have the same lives
as us how dare you receive the sunlight in the same place as us
how dare you wear the same things as us how dare you
pronounce the same words as us with your tongue act like
you are the same people as us by wearing the same clothes
as us and die while forever receiving pain within your lethal
pain you all shall swallow into your gut the likes of the hell
of the world could there possibly be a problem with swallowing
hell since you all are not people cum that bring about a year of
famine cum that bring about epidemics more unsightly than
the people who have leprosy more so than the renegade
children more wicked than a vampire if anything you all should
live eternally we hope that you all are tormented within your
eternal pain we do not wish for you to repent we do not wish for
even the slightest ray of light or repentance to hit you and
make you all honorable we do not want that we do not hope
desire or long for that we simply hope for you all to receive pain
for all eternity without becoming honorable although you
claim to be people we do not believe that you are people
since only your beliefs are important you are not people you
cannot be since we believe that goodwill is inevitable we also
believe that you all being evil is inevitable as we do not dare
quibble over the source of goodwill you are all undebatably
evil bitches

we are not torturing you in order to kill you but to attest to you we need you evil for our good will because devils breathe inside of your stomachs angels dwell in our faces because you sprout in the corners we pass our time in the sunlight we live while stepping on you because you are the soles so you all should naturally be wicked naturally be devils naturally groan in a corner and naturally live as the bottom of a sullen you should continue to die as the bottom since your very lives are as in our lives are not a vice and since you are beings that will never get the opportunity to change we breathe with the opportunity to change whenever we desire if there is a problem then it is the world that is the problem and since we are in the world we become the problem but if we are the problem then does that mean our lives are the problem we place you all outside of the world and shift all of the problems that occur in the world to you however no matter what happens you must never peek at this world do not live in this world be born there live there die there and be buried there do not be remembered as we will not remember you so since you are beings that are leeching for only a very short instant you are nothing more than entities that have been caught in the line of sight for only this instant before you promptly disappear shortly after as you have always been this sort of race bear in mind our curse and imprecation: since you are like a bitch who was birthed by a venomous rubbish snake people like you should have never been born in the first place it is a problem because you were born it was a problem since the moment you were born the problem is that you are alive that you have lived and that you are going to continue to live although you are trash and you will most likely live happily sticking your mouth in places even with that trashy life of yours

“I am sorry.”

.....

Before I knew it.

I was being embraced by someone.

And someone was stroking my back.

“I am sorry.”

.....

I can't see in front of me that well.

Marbas, was no longer here. I couldn't see him.

Only my master,

Master's voice. Master's touch.

Because, my eyes, couldn't see.

“.....I am sorry.”

“Why?”

For what reason.

For what reason are you apologizing?”

“I don't want to, Master..... I can never, forgive him..... I will never, forgive him..... Even though it hurt that much..... even though, he made me hurt that much, so much..... I can't, possibly forgive him..... this can't, be forgiven..... Wronged..... because he wronged me, if he wronged me..... if he knew, that was wrong..... if he knew..... why, for what reason..... why, exactly......”

No. I can't forgive him.

I can't even accept his apology.

Who, just who. That apology.

That sin.

That wrongdoing.

How.

".....I am sorry."

Aah.

Aaah, aaaaah.

Aah.....

Master.

"You do not have to forgive him."

Master.

"Do not forgive him for all eternity."

Master.

"You do not have to forgive anyone. Simply make all the people who had wronged you kneel. Receive the apologies which you must receive. And———and simply, continue to live."

My master.

FIN.

I'm digressing, but I believe that eyes are called eyeholes because tears flow out from them.

Hello, readers. And sorry. I'm currently kneeling down on both of my knees while writing this afterword. This isn't a psychological figure of speech, but I'm actually physically kneeling. I'm typing this while kneeling.

Coincidentally, as my computer monitor is at the perfect height on my desk to apologize, and if you consider the fact that half of my life is spent on the computer, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that half of my life was born at a height for apologizing. I'm sorry

..... My manuscript was excessively, extremely late.

While expressing my gratitude to cocorip, the illustrator of <Dungeon Defense>, as per usual, I wish to also write my apology here. By periodically finishing my work and sending the manuscript, the illustrator will be able to draw each scene while taking their time, but I believe that this time around, it must have been incredibly difficult to work on the illustrations because of me. I'm sorry. Next time, I'll resolve myself more.

So, along with my apology, I will also be speaking sincerely to you, my readers. In this volume 5 as well, cocorip's illustrations have proven their specialty most satisfactorily. Please go back to the beginning of the book and look at the color illustrations once more. There is a sea that is exquisitely dyed in purple. Moreover, Humbaba is there looking this way while skipping around.

Is it not beautiful?

Furthermore, sitting on the right, marvel at Lapis Lazuli who is collapsed on the surface of the water, appearing as if she were drenched in water ever since the moment she was born.

Is it not beautiful?

In addition, behold Laura De Farnese who is sitting in a defenseless state while brushing her bang behind her ear, with a gaze that appears as if she wouldn't go out of her way to block anyone who approaches her in a defenseless state, but wouldn't particularly be interested in them either.

Is it not beautiful?

Additionally, although there's a male standing in the center with some bath towel wrapped around his neck, please just ignore this child. I wonder what the significance of this child's existence is. I don't understand. For starters, the fact that he isn't a beautiful girl makes this unknown man's value drop by 90%. I'm saying this with the utmost sincerity.

Thank you to cocorip who drew beautiful illustrations this time as well.

Editor.

I've committed a grave sin.....

Editor, I thought that if I left land and went to an island, of course, due to its political and diplomatic characteristics this peninsula actually isn't a peninsula and is no different to an island, in any case, if I went to a smaller island than that, to be exact, I thought that my manuscript would become better if I wrote it at Jeju Island. But because nothing came out even then, I thought that if I went into a Buddhist temple, the Beomeosa Temple of Busan, even though I tried to write while doing a temple stay for the first time in my life, even though I had done the 108 bows for the first time in my life, this, because I still couldn't write despite having done all this..... I've committed a grave sin. I'm sorry.

I believe that you readers may be unfamiliar with how important of a position editors hold. However, for <Dungeon Defense>, especially this volume 5, this was a volume for which the hard work of the

editor was absolutely necessary. Every direction has their own respective intentions. If the editor edits something while not knowing what my intentions are, then the direction immediately loses its life force. Not only the direction, but the black and white illustrations and the positioning of the lines are the same as well.

If you readers enjoyed volume 5, then know that the editor's touch was in that hard work. People often refer to their editors as cocreators. I can say without any pretense that I'm a happy author for being able to work together with an editor who I can refer to as a 'cocreator'. I shall do my best to write my next manuscript better. I give my thanks to my editor and Youngsang Publishing Media, Inc.

Finally, to my readers.

I'm sorry. I had promised in volume 4 that I would present to everyone a manuscript as soon as possible. I was unable to keep my promise. After a long period of time, I was finally able to barely prepare this single book during this season where autumn is approaching Chuseok. Once again, I apologize.

Excluding volume 1, in <Dungeon Defense>, I've been trying to put in a subject that's meaningful to me in each volume. Additionally, I try to sculpt that subject into an interesting story. There has never been a time where I had contemplated about what I could possibly talk about and how I could make it into a story more than I did while working on this volume. I wonder if I had finished this manuscript excessively hurriedly because I was being chased by that thought and I blame myself for it.

In <Dungeon Defense> I confidently act out scenes and write lines. My confidence comes solely from the cheers of you, my readers. Thanks to those of you who had sent me an email letter. Thanks to those of you who had written down their appreciation and sent it to me. Before being thankful for the contents of the letters, I'm thankful for the fact that you all are still writing letters to someone, and the fact that that someone could be me. I felt so sinful for not being able to finish my manuscript for half a year, so there were many letters

which I could not respond to. I ran away because I was ashamed. Since I was now able to barely release this volume, I will be reading all of the letters I had pushed aside and be responding to them.

Not only the letters, but the very act of you all reading these very words is the same as you cheering me on. I wonder how this volume was to you all. There is something I challenge myself to do each volume, but if that challenge was projected well in your eyes, then there is nothing more that I could hope for. While imagining that this book, which I had sent out into the world, is placed in all sorts of rooms, I shall give my thanks to you, my readers, once more.

Thank you.

2017-9-21

In a room where the light isn't left on for long

Yoo Heon Hwa